

АВТОР
БЕСТСЕЛЛЕРОВ
«ЛЕДОКОЛ» И
«АКВАРИУМ»

ВИКТОР СУВОРОВ КОНТРОЛЬ



*новое издание,
дополненное
и переработанное*



Abstract

Viktor Suvorov's action-packed historical novel "Control", which became a continuation of the story "Snake Eater" and a prequel to the novel "Choice", tells about the struggle for power, intrigues and conspiracies in the top leadership of the USSR on the eve of World War II. The author vividly and thoroughly recreates the psychological atmosphere in Soviet society in 1938–1939, when Stalin, implementing a grandiose plan to seize power in the country, completely subjugated the party and economic apparatus, the army and special services with the help of the most severe repressions.

Viktor Suvorov skillfully draws psychological portraits of people who aspired to power, who got to power and reveled in it, reveals the true mechanisms of governing the country and vast masses of people through fear and terror, and shows what motives Stalin and his associates were guided by. For the new edition, the

novel has been completely revised by the author and supplemented by several interesting episodes.

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Victor Suvorov Control

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* * *

Characters

Nastya Streletskaya (Firebird).

Holovanov, aka Dragon, comrade in sparkling boots. Comrade Stalin, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks.

Shirmanov,

provocateur-performer. Someone in grey.

Professor Perzeev, theorist of cannibalism. Comrade Yezhov, People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of the USSR, General Commissar of State Security. Mr Stanton, CEO of Pharaoh & sons."

Comrade Berman, People's Commissar for Communications of the USSR, Commissar of State security of the 1st rank, former head of the GULAG of the NKVD of the USSR.

Comrade Frinovsky, Deputy People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, Army Commander 1st Rank.

Comrade Bocharov, senior major of state security, head of the Kuibyshev department of the NKVD.

Comrade Beria, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of

Georgia. Master

Nikanor. Instructor

Skvortsov. Katka Mikhailova,

laughter girl. Sey Seich, special train

conductor. Lyuska Syroezhka, special courier of the Central

Committee. Sevastyan, bear cub.

Terenty Peresypkin, major. Mr Humphrey,

electrical engineer. Leaders, guards, servants, Chekists, performers, guards, political, thieves, household workers, athletes, workers, peasants, labor intelligentsia, cannibals, the broad masses of the people.

Prologue

"Now kiss my boot." The shining tip of the boot gently jabbed into the face: kiss. Do not dodge this glow. Don't turn your face. Do not turn, because the hands are twisted behind the back and they are pulling higher and higher. Little by little. And the pain gradually slips to the limit, after which the cry cannot be

restrained. She doesn't want to scream at all. She decided not to scream. In the old days, when sailors were flogged with molts in the sailing fleet, they put a rag in everyone's teeth so as not to yell. But those good times are gone. Now they put a rubber ball in their mouth when they are shot in a covered prison. And if the shooting is in nature, then they don't put the ball in their mouths - yell as much as you want. Ori for your pleasure. And if they beat or break their hands, then the cry is not stopped, but demanded. The scream is knocked out. Such is the fashion. In general, torture without screaming is a failed torture.

Defective. Like beer without foam. They also wanted the torture to succeed. They wanted her to scream. Therefore, they gently pull her hands higher and higher. And spring is raging in the execution forest. Such a shameless spring. Shalaya. Slutty. And every rotten needle smelled of spring. It is a pity that the smell of shoe polish is mixed with the smell of stale needles. The smell of polished boots. And that boot, kindly, but persistently, pokes at the teeth: well, kiss me. And another voice, almost affectionate, prompts:

- Kiss, fool. Chavo to you. Boy one more time, we'll shoot you. And the end of the matter. And you do not suffer, and we will not be late for football. Well, then, you know yourself, we'll beat it with boots. Tsaluy...

It was good before. They used to say: kiss the villain's hand. Now the boots. In the old days, before the execution, a glass of wine was supposed to be executed. Now it's not supposed to. Now only performers drink before the performance. And after. The entire forest was soaked by the firing squad.

Hands pulled up a little more. So it crunched. Some kind of twig would have come across nearby, it would have seized that twig with its teeth and screamed and would have kept it. But the twig does not fall into the teeth. Only wet sand and pine needles. And the hands are already so upturned that you can only breathe into yourself. I can't breathe - my eyes are glassy.

They let go a little, and she exhaled with a sob. I thought that my hands would let go a little more. They really let go a little more, but then they gasped with a boot below the ribs. They gasped so much that the pain in their hands was cut off. And in general, all the pain at once drowned out.

One big new pain slowly seeped into her at first, and then suddenly gushed, filling her. And overflowing. She gasps for air, but he does not. Her hands dropped. They fell to the

ground. She somehow does not care about her hands. It doesn't occur to me to move my hands. She just wants air. Would breathe. And it looks like you already got it. It just doesn't come out of the mouth. Here she gasped again with her boot. Not the sparkly ones. Sparkling - for kisses. Others gasped. Yalov. Yalovy is heavier. Maybe they didn't gasp so much. Only from the second blow bells rang sweetly, and she swam calmly and quietly into the alluring blackness. As she sailed away, she heard other blows, rare and heavy. But it was already

it didn't hurt at all, and therefore she smiled a kind, bright smile.

Then she lay with her face buried in the wet sand, in the rotten needles. It was cold and unbearably wet. The overcoat was torn off, doused with water. There is still some snow on the ridges. That's why it's cold on earth. If water is poured over. Slowly, slowly, she emerged from that blackness, from which, it seems, there should be no return. She did not want to return from where there are no smells, to the smell of snowdrops, to the smell of spring, to the smell of a polished boot.

But it took her out. She swims towards the voices. And voices to her swim: -

Damn, we'll be late for football.

"Finish her, Commander. She will not kiss the boots. - I'll make it. -

"Spartacus" today would kick the tail ... She

returned to bliss. And she didn't want to move. I didn't want to give myself away, I didn't want to show that here she was again

lies here at their feet. They were in a hurry. And she was in no hurry. She has nowhere else to hurry. Even for football. She would lie quietly, quietly and for a long time. Wet ice clothes are sweet to her. And prickly needles of feather down. And she wanted to express unearthly bliss with human words. But it turned out only sweet "ahh!".

And they heard a long groan.

"I told you, we didn't finish it. And

hit her, burned, blinded, deafened. Then I realized: they threw out another bucket. And again the boot shining at the face: kiss. She looked at him

for a long time. At the very eyes of the boots. Therefore, it is convenient to consider. Not a single crack on the boots. Polished so that it is not even black, but silver. So close to the face of the boot that you can distinguish not only the smell of wax, but also the smell of leather. New boot. Creaks. Lumps of wet sand stuck to the welts of the needles. The splendor of the boot is not violated by this, but emphasized. Shafts - standing. Seems like metal. There are folds between the head of the boot and the bootleg. But barely visible. Almost invisible wrinkles.

Commander's boot. You can not look at the wearer of such a boot.

As soon as you see such a boot, immediately lower your eyes to the bottom - in front of you is the big boss. And you can also catch your reflection in such a

boot. She saw herself in a boot. At first, I didn't even realize who was so decorated with bruises, who twisted his broken mouth. Then I found out. Thoughts in her head go one after another, slowly, slowly. Like a camel caravan in the

desert. I wonder what it tastes like, this

boot? And suddenly the smell of the boot began to irritate her. Boiling, a deep inner rage rose up in his throat and escaped with a barely audible growl. Her face is in the sand. Nobody looks at her face. And if I had looked, I would have recoiled when I saw how easily and simply from a modern person, from a thin girl, light layers of millennia of civilization came off, and a Neanderthal cannibal girl with terrible blue eyes remained. Just had the right Komsomolochka. The girl became a beast.

She roared with a jubilant victorious roar, and unbending with a mighty spring, she threw herself on a sparkling boot, embracing him with both hands.

She rushed, as a snake-eater boa rushes to a three-meter king cobra: covering the victim immediately and completely. She charged with that throaty roar with which a young lioness throws herself at her first buffalo. She knew how to break human legs: a

left grab and a push with a shoulder below the knee. A person rarely distributes their weight evenly on both legs. More often shifts from foot to foot, moving the load from one to another. And it is important to throw yourself on the leg that is currently under the most load. She did it. And it's also important, pushing under the

knee with a shoulder to where the nerve knot is, with all your weight to keep the enemy's foot on the ground. If successful, at least one fracture is guaranteed. There is little weight in it. But the technique... She kept his foot on

the ground, and therefore, near her ear, in the polished top, the bones crackled, breaking. He fell back with a long howl. She knew that sudden loss of balance was one of the two main causes of panic.

He was crushed. And not the pain of broken bones, but fear was the cause of his howl.

She would at this moment rush again. On the recumbent. On the throat. She would cut her throat. But she didn't think about her throat. She hated the boot, and it was in him that she bit her

teeth. There, where slightly noticeable folds. She no longer needs to take care of her teeth. Her life was already ticking off the last moments. Therefore, the thought is not about her teeth, but about the boot, which she must not only bite through, but tear apart, scatter along with pieces of meat

through the spring forest. Her mouth filled with hot blood. She just didn't know if it was his blood or

her own. She was beaten. But the blows echo in the body. Without pain. This is what happens when you sit on a telegraph pole, which is hit with a sledgeha

trembling, but you do not

hurt. Then again there was the

ringing darkness. Then she returned from the darkness. But no longer a ferocious Neanderthal beauty, but a Komsomol member Nastya Streletskaya. Nastya the Firebird.

She was dragged to the pit. She knew - to fulfill. She laughed at them. She knew she had won. The old rule: if you want an easy death, kiss the boot. If you don't want to kiss, you won't get an easy death. They failed to make her scream. They failed to make her kiss the boot, and yet she won the right to an easy death. She defeated them. She knew it. And they knew. She was dragged by the hands, and her feet along the sand. By bumps.

Through the pits. By roots. The grave pit opened its mouth. Lumps of wet white sand

fell into the pit from under the ash boots of the performers. And she saw at once all those who were shot today. Still warm. The pit soars, giving back

spring warmth of human bodies.

Lots of bodies in the pit. To the brim. All the dead eyes are looking at her at once. For live. As long as I live.

They bent her head over the pit: examine the contents. Look at the pine roots, and shovels on the dump of sand, and heads, heads, heads with open mouths, with protruding tongues, with eyes half-closed now forever.

And she didn't think, she didn't guess that leaving this life would fall to the sounds of the immortal waltz "Amur Waves". But it turned out that way. Somewhere far, far away, behind a birch grove, behind a forest lake, a melody flowed quietly. And no one heard

her. And she

heard. She knew it was the right tune. What is it for her. That the waltz rumbles and calls her to stay. But she knew it was time to leave. Go into a bunch of intertwined soft bodies. To go from the stupefying smells of spring to the smell of caked blood, to the smell of a butcher shop, to the smell of wet sand and pine roots. But it all started so nicely for

her. However, and

ends well: not crammed with boots, but shot. Shot.

The main thing in life is to die right. It's nice to die. Everyone wants to live beautifully. But everyone else is preventing everyone from living the way they want. And no one bothers to die beautifully. And this must be used. But few people use it. And she took the opportunity to die beautifully. And succeeded. And time

has stopped. Frozen. Then it started slowly again. A pistol bolt clanged over her right ear. She recognized this clang: Lahti L-35. And a shot rang out. And it all started so well...

Chapter 1

1

It all started with the fact that the instructor Skvortsov built parachute team and said: -

Hello. –

Hello! - girls in chorus. - Can anyone dance? - Gee, -

girls have fun. Does

everyone know how to

dance? "Gee," the girls replied. Without translation it is clear:

how not to be able! - Okay, - instructor Skvortsov says, - who knows how to dance

three steps forward... One step...

Arsh! The girl's formation trembled and cut off three steps forward. Only Nastya

remained in place. Instructor Skvortsov looked at

the formation: "I don't need so much. I only need one. OK. Who knows how to dance well ... - Skvortsov said with an emphasis on the word "good."

– Three steps forward... One step...

Arsh! Again, the whole system cut off three steps forward. Only Nastya remained

in place. - All right, girls. I need someone who dances very well, - this time the emphasis is on the word "very", - three steps forward ... Step ...

Arsh! Three

more steps the formation cut off and

froze. And Nastya is alone in the

same place. Then instructor Skvortsov

approached her. - Anastasia, what is it, you don't know how

to dance?

- I do

not know how. - You're

lying. - I'm lying. - Are you lying? And why? - I don't want to dance.

- You don't have to dance.

Instructor Skvortsov walked around her, looked around. "I didn't say you had to dance. I have a full Moscow of dancers. I need a girl with coordination, flexibility, speed of movement, accuracy. Let's do it this way: you'll just show us... - I vowed... - And this will not be considered a dance. Demonstration of ability. - Then please. Only I do not demonstrate without music. - There is music. Instructor Skvortsov hoisted a

gramophone on a stool, twisted the handle as it should be, raised his shiny head. There is a murmur among the girls: just look at me! Yes, I do without music!

Instructor Skvortsov put his head on the record, growled the gramophone, grunted like a great singer before performing, and drums suddenly struck in his gramophone gut, saxophones howled, trumpets blared: tram-pum-pum-pum, tram-pum-pum-pum, Pa, boo-boo-boo-boo!!! With the

first sounds, Nastya froze, stretched out filled with inspiration, as if an electric charge passed through her smoothly, as if blue sparks fell from her fingers. And she went. And she went. "Hey," the girls said. -

Ege. Standing around, watching.

Some didn't even look. On parachute laying went. And

Nastya the Firebird dances like a clockwork Negro rhythm. And it seems like a wave goes up and down her body, like there are no bones in it, no joints. Like a snake to the tune. Dancing so that he does not leave the place. But after all, the snakes on the tail are dancing, without leaving the spot. With skill, the stage is not required at all. He who knows how and the dance hall is not needed. With skill, you can dance on the spot. On your own tail.

Somewhere in Calcutta or Madras would appreciate. And Chicago would appreciate it. True, they appreciated it in Moscow as well. - Well, girls, who, besides Nastasya, wants to demonstrate talent?

Nobody wants: jumping today, energy needs to be saved, not up to dancing.

The instructor Skvortsov laughs. And in Nastya's ear: - Well done. Ay, well done. I'll sell you for three parachutes.

2

Nastya has work in the evenings. Hammer and Sickle Factory. Foundry. Sweeping business. Seven hours a day. In accordance with the Stalinist Constitution. And the parachute section - in the

morning. - Many people think that the main thing in parachuting is laying, jumping, landing. Nonsense. Don't believe this girl. Fools think that he landed - and the matter is over. No, my dolls are rags, after landing the most important thing only begins. It is necessary to hide the parachute and leave the landing site. Therefore, every day I will drive you to a full marathon. Avoiding persecution, one must be able to swim across the river. Therefore, every day, in addition to the marathon, we will swim a kilometer. We don't have a pool, but we don't need one. The Moscow River is our basin. - And in winter? - In winter,

at

Serebryany Bor, the icebreaker will break the track for us.

3

The evening shift has died down. The shop is quiet. And the dressing rooms were silent. Nobody. Endless rows of iron cabinets. Each cabinet has a lock. All castles are different. If there were any collector, then expanse for him, he would immediately collect a complete collection of castles of all times and peoples in the locker room of one

workshop alone. Caution Nastya in her iron closet - yurk. Like an invisible mouse. Just leave a slit. Because there is a handle on the outside, but not on the inside. The lock will click - how then to get out of this mousetrap? The one who made wardrobes for locker rooms could not imagine in any way that the wardrobe would serve as a bedroom for someone. Home of relatives.

Nastya pressed her back against the iron wall, hugged her knees with her arms. Head on your knees and sleep. It's a pity, the legs numb quickly. Too bad you can't pull them out. Too bad it's cold at night. It is a pity that oiled bathrobes do not warm and the head hurts from their smell. All this is just nonsense. After a marathon, after a kilometer swim, after parachute training (and for those who know how to dance well - also shooting, and sambo, and orienteering), after an evening shift, he sleeps well even in the iron locker room of the foundry of the Sickle and Hammer plant.

4

Strict instructor Skvortsov: - So it is. Now we have September. I declare swimming season. Any activity will start with swimming. One hour. And so we will continue. Whole year. It never gets cold in Moscow. Rarely, rarely, it reaches minus thirty. It's cold here in Siberia. And it's warm here. Always. But here, in Siberia, the water is never cold. Never. If the water is cold, it hardens and turns into ice. But in any ice, you can always make a hole. In the hole, the water is always warm. Until it hardens. But we will make a new hole by then. And further. I forbid you to touch the water with your foot. I forbid it with my hand. No need to touch her. You can see the temperature of the water by eye. It didn't turn into ice, which means it's warm. Enter the water quickly. From this, decisiveness is developed. Enter the water the way a skydiver enters the void. All clear? - All. - Then one minute to undress ... gone. And from tomorrow

undress quickly.

5

Why is Nastya sleeping in the closet? Because there is nowhere else. Most recently, she lived in a large apartment. In a very large one. But there was only one Nastya for the whole apartment. All over Moscow. All over Russia. Apartment

booming. Moscow is booming. Steps are given in the apartment. Footsteps resound in Moscow: dark people walk on dark nights. They knock on the door. You are under arrest! You are under arrest! You are under arrest! You are under arrest!

Moscow hid. She quieted down. The dead one pretends to be. Moscow behaves exactly like the city of Konotop. When the punks yell songs through the streets. In those

strange nights, Nastya went from room to room. In each - all four walls are lined with books. Under the ceiling And the ceilings used to be what height they did. Everything would be fine, but on the entrance door the Moscow City Council pinned a resolution with a button: "Release until 13.7.1936." The resolution is in perfect order: a seal with ears of corn, with a sickle and a hammer, and a signature with a hook.

Where are the books to go? And in general, what to do? Father, the red commander, turned out to be an enemy. I was not afraid to argue with Tukhachevsky himself. And whoever argues with Tukhachevsky is the enemy. And the mother turned out to be an enemy. Enemy without the right to correspondence. And the White Guard grandfather was always the enemy of this government. Grandfather somewhere in a small Ukrainian town hides his past. You could sometimes visit your grandfather, quietly, for a week. Now you can't.

The path is booked. Nastya had many friends in Moscow. Only after the arrest of his father and mother's friendship somehow went wrong, and a new one ceased to take shape.

Until July 13, a week remained, and therefore Nastya sat day and night, leafing through books. She read slowly. She was taught to read quickly, but she resisted this. The one who reads quickly does not lead his eyes along the lines, but leads his eyes along one line from top to bottom. Nine seconds is a page. So Nastya did not want to read. She has her own

style. There was no way to explain to her why she had to slide her eyes down the page. She did not understand at all why it was necessary to read one page and then another. Open book - two pages. Therefore, she always read both pages at once, not glancing either along the lines or from top to bottom, but covering both pages at once with one glance. And she held her gaze. A normal person needs eighteen seconds for two pages; she needs a whole minute.

But there are benefits to slow reading. Eighteen seconds is a superficial reading. The text is remembered, but only if it is understandable and interesting to the reader. If you spend on two pages

a whole minute, then any text is assimilated and completely remembered, regardless of whether it is understandable or not, interesting or not very. Then, if desired, any once read text can be reproduced in memory.

Any human head is capable of holding the full contents of the books of any library in the world, no matter how many millions of volumes it contains. Nastya never had the intention of memorizing the contents of all the books in any library. Read what came to hand. What I read, I remembered. Having read books in memory, at any moment she could mentally open any book in any place and reread it. And noticed strange things behind her. He cries for no reason, then laughs. And it was she who read Gogol to herself, then Lermontov, then Hasek. And then, in an empty echoing room, I decided to check how I remembered the Field Manual PU-36.

The book is quite tiny. 215 pages. 385 articles. In addition to the articles, Nastya also remembered something that didn't seem to apply to the charter: "The text was printed on paper from the Kama Paper Mill, printed in the 1st printing house of the State Military Publishing House of the NPO of the USSR, Moscow, st. Skvortsova-Stepanova, 3.

People who read quickly, in order to memorize a book of 200–300 pages, must read it twice. Some need to read the book three times. And Nastya remembered everything she read the first time. So the time spent reading slowly pays off. Can Nastya tell the whole PU-36 from beginning to end. Not in their own words, but precisely those with which the charter

written.

Can randomly quote individual articles. Just call the number. Article 128th: "The art of drawing up an order requires the ability to express clearly and categorically the idea of a battle ..." There are short articles in the Charter, just like 280th. Three lines. And there are long ones, like the 308th and 309th. Almost the entire page. But she doesn't care how to quote. Maybe - by articles, maybe - by pages. The page often begins in mid-sentence. Halfway through and ends. Here Nastya begins with a half-word. You can check it line by line. There are 6544 lines in the book.

For example, the fifth line on the 139th page is as follows: "a tip from 800 m. If it does not meet these requirements." And the sixth line: "it works, the battery rolls out on alarm for."

I checked myself. She praised herself: oh yes Nastenka! But what is all this now? Books, books.

Where are the books to go? And

Nastya decided to leave the books in the apartment. Those that she loved and read, she still remembers. And those that she did not like and did not read, why did she need them?

She left the apartment. Left school. Now he lives in a closet. Without books. Master Nikanor notices that Nastya is hiding in the locker room in the evenings. It's a mess.

Suddenly she is an enemy saboteur? What if she, being left alone, spoils the equipment? But Master Nikanor is kind. Doesn't run on the street. He knows that Nastya has no other home than this iron closet.

6

Is it not possible to find a more suitable place in Moscow than a closet in the locker room of the foundry of the Sickle and Hammer factory?

You can find such a place. But, left alone in the whole world, Nastya decided to start life from the beginning. And start from the top. What is the main thing for us? The main thing is the proletarian origin. Where to get the proletarian origin? All in her family up to the twelfth generation - the people of service, archers and gunners, uhlans, hussars and dragoons, and even one cavalry guard was. That is why the surname is Streletskaya. In her family, those who stood at the throne, who kept the throne, not sparing their lives, who shook that throne more than once, like they shake a pear, chuckling. In her family are those whom the kings did not disdain to chop off their heads with their own hands. In her family, those who were driven to Siberia in shackles for wickedness. In her family, those who from Siberia in bast shoes came to the capitals of white stone and with a paw of a man took the dynasty by the white chest, like a woman. In her family, those who drank away half the kingdom in one night, and gave another half of the kingdom to a friend. For memory. In her family, those who went to the ends of the earth to atone for great sins. In her family are those who came from the Great War with the officer George around his neck. In her family and those who, hitting the ground with their hats, went to the Reds

service, shed blood for them, reached the big rhombuses in buttonholes and disappeared on Solovki, where the ancestors of recalcitrant sins atoned for. And there were no proletarians in the family. Having recognized this fact, it

was possible to go further in two ways. The first way: to attribute the proletarian origin to oneself. The second way: openly write "from the nobility" in all questionnaires. And join the proletariat. Start a proletarian dynasty from scratch. From myself: Nastya Zhar is a bird - a proletarian in the original generation. Nastya the proletarian is sitting in an iron closet. I went through two marathons today, crawled for a kilometer and a half, threw

a sixty-kilogram stuffed animal over myself for two hours on the carpet and laid parachutes for two hours. And seven o'clock with a broom in the foundry. By calculation, she should fall asleep immediately. But he doesn't sleep. Maybe change fate? Maybe you can live without a proletarian closet? Urkas walk around Moscow. Nastya has an unhealthy interest in them. Proud people. They crush them. Bent. Whom they fail to bend, they shoot. But lessons are not translated in Moscow. To them, maybe? She's not bent. You can only shoot her. So let it be.

Only the thieves are fine. But a woman cannot command them. Like it or not, Nastya does not know. But I heard this. This doesn't suit Nastya. She would be in command. If Nastya had been born during the time of Elizabeth or Catherine, she would have taken the throne. Or she would have died in the bastion of the Peter and Paul Fortress, like Princess Tarakanova. If it is impossible for a woman with thieves to dream of a great future, then she will not go to thieves. There is also an estate in Moscow. Prosperous. Vendors, waiters, everyone around trade and distribution. They live well. Good job. There is another class in Moscow - writers, artists. But they break and bend. Those who are not bent are shot. And who is shooting? That would be to get into the ranks of those who oppress and break everyone. Only after all, someone breaks and

oppresses them. And shoots. Because Nastya went to the proletariat. The proletariat is the hegemon. Nastya decided to go

as an assistant foundry worker - they didn't take it. Not Indian

business, they say.

And the second shift has died down again. Rushed the working class out the gate factory.

It's always like this: the first ones break through the passage, like a stream that has broken through a dam, then the stream weakens, weakens, then flows in a thin stream. And then one at a time - droplets. The most recent ones are still dragging on. In the locker room for another hour, the latter quarrel. Everything calmed down.

Nastya - in her

closet. And right there, opening the door, Master Nikanor: "Shtoy, Nastasyushka, aren't you in a hurry

to go home?" "You know, Nikanor Ivanovich, that I don't

have one at home. - Where are you, Nastasyushka, spend your nights? - I'll spend it here. I have nowhere else. -

Disorder. Who knows, suspicions will go:

aren't you pouring crushed glass into machine tools at night? You know yourself: there are enemies all around and pests. They will immediately remember that your parent was a high military rank, but he turned out to be an enemy. And an apple from an apple tree ... They will inform the NKVD ... - Then, Nikanor Ivanovich, I will go to the station

or in the park on

shop.

- Late. If you have already spent one night in the workshop, this is enough. For this in our time planted. They will notice you on an enemy article. But don't be afraid. I've been following you for a long time. I'm up for you. You will be in friendship with me - I will not inform anyone. Thank you,

Nikanor Ivanovich. - Come here. I

have a mattress in the booth, and there is something to hide. Sleep there every night. - Nikanor Ivanovich, I'll do it

somehow. - Here, they say, come! And presses it all, and

embraces. He breathes heat, and carries vodka with garlic from him. Nikanor's eyes are filled with foal blood, he breathes a fire-breathing furnace. He grabbed her shoulders with his paws. Will not let go. Anger drips from teeth. Don't refuse this. Tearing apart. Nastya relaxed her shoulders a little, and Nikanor leaned over completely.

Then she lightly moved his right knee. Nikanor bent over, let go of Nastya, pressed his hands to where the legs converged. And this is the one

the moment that every sambist dreams of. Nastya clasped both hands with a lock into one fist, raised it higher and cut her master on the scruff of the neck. Nikanor gasped and fell on both knees. This is a very good situation. Nastya knows that it is necessary to beat him while on his knees. Don't let him jump. And then he will hurt with a shovel, no sambo will help. Therefore - another blow and in the same place. By the neck. But now with the foot: the right knee to the chin and straightening sharply down. The edge of the foot on the neck. Nikanor gasped.

Here he would have to explain that, they say, the slip came out and he did not want to offend her. And she opened her mouth, and she kicked him in the stomach so hard that Nikanor gurgled and slurped, and all the words were forgotten at once, and even if they remembered, they couldn't breathe, let alone utter a word. And she moved his heel from top to bottom over the liver or some other sensitive inside so that greenish-violet circles went. And he puts on

shoes. Shoe. Now the same technique, but only with a foot shod in a large unbending proletarian boot - on the inside of a sensitive. Master Nikanor realized that it was not for nothing that Comrade Stalin was preparing a million paratroopers. Not for fun. Not only are they jumping in their circles with parachutes, but also ... The next blow

with a boot was in the left eye. Like the sun exploded in the eye and scattered like a trillion sparks. Immediately and in the teeth master Nikanor received. The same shoe. No, it won't work

like that! From time immemorial in Rus', the law of nobility: they don't beat a lying person. Communists cursed youth morality fucked up. Look, he mocks the recumbent. Wait a minute! Nikanor waved his right paw to grab Nastya by the leg and pull. But Nikanor-master did not know that especially good dancers and dancers are valued in parachute circles. I didn't know that those who dance well are specially selected and specially prepared. Who knows how to dance well, that body is flexible, the muscles are elastic, the reaction of a wolf and the coordination of movements are feline. He has the stamina of a camel. From such sambists are obtained.

Nastya dodged Nikanorov's paw, rowing across the floor, and repeated the technique: the right knee high up, to the very face, and straight straight down. On the fingers. To not wave a rake.

Howled Nicanor. Howled in pain. From self-pity. And she to him kneecap: if he chases, so that he does not chase far.

Nicanor rises. Big and scary. Break Nastenka. She's scared. And funny. As an instructor, Skvortsov taught, for Nikanor's brush, for the right one, and the brush - for a break. And through him. Muzzle on the iron cabinet. The closet slammed, buzzed. Nastya understands that Russia is great, but she has nowhere to retreat. Therefore, Nastya keeps the defense, as the Field Manual requires: inflicting short sudden counterattacks. The final one is along the ridge. Neutralizing. Permanently neutralizing. For many hours.

At the dawn of a new joyful day, Nikanor the master went to his booth. He also has a mattress. And there is something to hide. Went on all fours. Or, as we more accurately express it, on all fours. And he vowed: do not touch the paratroopers. And how much pleasure from this: no boobs, no fatness. He didn't really need anything from her. Think! He doesn't want to - he doesn't need to. Who needs her like that! Yes, Nikanor has a full workshop of such people. Just whistle...

Chapter 2

1

"Come in, comrade Holovanov. I'll show you a miracle. Comrade Kholovanov comes into the darkness of the balcony. Comrade Holovanov's boots are so sparkling that the darkness in the corners has dissipated. Previously, singers sang here on the balcony. Now the balcony serves as a warehouse for sports equipment. And from the balcony, from a height, everything that happens inside the church can be seen as if on the palm of your hand. The carpet is sports in the middle, and the instructor of the girls is training.

Churches are good for gyms. The arches are high, it breathes well. - Admire. Comrade Holovanov admires. There is something to admire. On the

carpet, the girls throw each other. And the instructor throws them. And they are instructors. "Look at that little

white one. So I'm looking at her. Do you feel different from others? - Feel. - In any wrestling, in classical and freestyle, in our sambo, in judo among the Japanese, in any national martial arts, a grab and a throw are distinguished - these are two fundamental elements. Captured - abandoned. And many masters sin with this: they seize and trample, try on, adapt, and only then leave. And her capture from the throw is inseparable. She has a grab and a throw merged together. One touch. In principle, she has no capture. Throw immediately. And completely sudden. We are all waiting for her capture and throw. Here it will grab. Here it will grab. We are waiting, but the capture and throw are still sudden. You know, like in a laboratory, you wait: now an electric discharge will shy away. Right now. But he's still sudden. Look, just touch it with your fingertips - immediately throw. Yes, what! Doesn't throw, but prints. Here, look: a deceptive move. Now - throw. And when you managed

- Nice. - See

more. Fraudulent movement. Another! Throw! And they did not see the capture. And here she is thrown. In general, they leave her only after receiving her consent to this. Don't quit without permission. She will throw it off the carpet with a counter. So, she is thrown. Are you paying attention? Printed to the carpet, but she does not lie on it. Doesn't lie. And he doesn't get up. It bounces off the carpet like a ball off concrete. No matter how you throw her, she is on her feet right there. Op! And yet - oops! Snake. Shaped snake. No matter how you throw a snake, it is immediately ready for a new throw. "But she

must make mistakes, too. - Eat. There

is, comrade Holovanov, and she has mistakes. This is what the great masters do. She holds all receptions to the right side. Only to the right. And you need to throw both right and left unpredictably. We'll fix it. Give her the best coach of the Union, and in a year you can put her up for international competitions ... Here she is throwing again! Isn't it a miracle? "A miracle," agreed the comrade in sparkling

boots. "Why, Skvortsov, are you demonstrating a miracle to me?" I'll take you away. "You will take me away," instructor

Skvortsov meekly agreed. - Clearer day - take away. But you are not the last bastard, comrade Holovanov, to take such a miracle from my club for free.

"And your club needs parachutes..." "American

ones," instructor Skvortsov modestly

lowered his eyes. -

You know, parachutes with green labels? Silkworm on a cobweb.

- I know the silkworm. Himself only by American parachutes

I use. - Here

they are. - And

you, by any chance, did not show the girl to the Chekists? -

How can you! -

And the military? - You first. Do you know me. If you don't have parachutes for an old friend, then I will, of course, ... - And how does

she jump? - It

jumps beautifully. -

From what heights?

- From a thousand. From three. From

five. From seven. - Did you let it in with oxygen?

"What about seven without oxygen?"

- What about

lingering ones? - Comrade Kholovanov, I would show it to you without checking it in protracted. You hate questions.

"Really, you didn't show it to anyone?"

"Shoot me right there, Comrade Kholovanov, with your left-handed left-winger.

"Look, Skvortsov. I will drive into mantula places. You know me. On the great construction sites of communism. - I understand. I tell the truth, I did

not show the girl to anyone. - OK. Agreed. Tomorrow you'll get five american

parachutes. -

One

hundred. "I said five. - At

first I also thought - five. Even for three I was going to sell it to you. For three Soviet. Then he changed his mind. He goes to class every day. Three hours of sambo. And three more hours of parachute training. Another hour we swim every day. We run a little. Radio circle, as expected. And besides everything, she works a full shift at the Hammer and Sickle. And it doesn't seem to get tired. - How would you know? - And you look at her. It looks like she sleeps three hours a day? - Does not look like it. - Look how

three people are printing to the

ground! Gem. Sanding is difficult. Just like a diamond should. But the sparkle is

unquenchable. After

grinding. You know how a pebble is in the hands of a cutter: they grind it for a long, long time, and here it is - r-r-time! - and lit up from one side. They turned it around to others: sharpen, sharpen, and - r-r-time! It also lit up from the other side. So do we. At each training session, we discover new sides in it. And glitter on every side. Chekists for

her...

Yes, I'll take it away for free. - You,

comrade Holovanov, are not the last bastard! - Not the latest. -

Then a hundred.

A man in sparkling boots has an apartment on Gorky Street. Big flat. He looked into the apartment for a moment. Grab things. Captured. Locked the apartment - and into the elevator. There are good elevators in the big houses on Gorky Street, and this elevator is the best. The best because under the buttons there is a keyhole. And no one pays attention to her. But if you insert a key into the well, then the elevator will no longer stop on any floor and will not open the door for anyone. Simple system. Unless, of course, you have this key in your pocket. A comrade in

sparkling boots turned out to have this key, and he

took advantage.

And the elevator is also good because if you insert the key into the well and press the buttons "4" and "1" at the same time, the elevator will go without stopping, slip through the first floor and go deeper and deeper. In an underground tunnel. The man knew

which buttons to press. Pressed. The elevator fell into the bowels of Moscow. And froze. The door opened. A man came out. To the right - a corridor into darkness, to the left - a corridor into darkness. And right down the hallway. Also in darkness. The comrade slashed his flashlight left and right and went straight ahead. Thirty steps - turn, forty more and turn again. Door in the wall. The door of the indestructible bomb shelter. The comrade at the door conjured, she stepped aside, exposing her half-meter thickness. And behind the door - an ordinary tunnel of the Moscow metro, but not a checkpoint, but a dead end. And a repair train in the tunnel. The repair train, as usual in the

metro, is a locomotive either diesel or electric, a mail car or a luggage car, and a platform with some kind of mechanisms. And the inscription is sweeping on the sides: "Glavspetsremstroy-12". If you look closely at the locomotive, if you delve into the essence, then it is easy to understand: the locomotive is both electric and diesel. It is better to roam the subway tunnels on electric energy. To not smoke the air. Well, if there is an extreme case, if the electricity is cut off and all traffic in the subway stops, the repair train cannot be stopped. He needs to move in any situation, especially in a critical one. That's why he has a diesel. And not all of him stagger through the underground tunnels,

repair train and on the surface there is a lot of work. And here again a diesel is needed.
In a

word, like on a submarine: under water on
we go on electricity, on the surface - on diesel engines. Near
the locomotive - machinists. Ordinary, our native Soviet machinists. Only a little
taller than usual and shoulders twice as wide. Just the difference. The machinists nodded
to the man in polished boots - and to their cabin of the locomotive. If the passenger has
arrived, then we are going now. And at the car, not either a postal one, or a luggage one,
there is a conductor. Also not from the weak hundred. It's strange: there is a conductor
in a passenger car, but here the car is clearly not a passenger car. It is only in the form
of a passenger, but there are few windows, more and more the wall is steel, and the
windows are here and there. The trailer even looks like a prison. The prison window is
also in short supply. And most likely, this car is not a baggage car, not a mail car, and
not even a prison car, but an ordinary laboratory for checking the tracks. There are such
in repair trains: in appearance and shape they look like an ordinary passenger car, but
inside they are stuffed with all sorts of equipment and devices. Because they do not
need many windows. In general, we won't guess yet what kind of car this is and what it
has

inside. Then it will become clear.

And now a comrade in boots gave a wide paw to the guide: - Hello, Seyich! -

Hello, comrade Holovanov.

Where do you order? - I'll order to Leningrad.

3

Glavspetsremstroy-12 whistled through empty underground tunnels, rumbled
through sleeping stations, jumped to the surface and stood still on the sidings of the
Leningradsky railway station among empty commuter trains. Now wait for the morning.
Exactly at 8:00 from the first platform of the Leningradsky

railway station, a red steam locomotive smoothly pulled a caravan of red cars with
a golden stripe over the windows and golden inscriptions: "Red Arrow".

"Glavspetsremstroy" waited two minutes and just as smoothly - behind the "Arrow". This is convenient so that the traffic schedules are not violated: I attached myself behind the express train at a distance of two semaphores, so follow it to Leningrad and go. Without stops.

There are two questions here. First, is it permissible for some maintenance train to slip into the schedule and follow right behind the Red Arrow? Here I am forced to answer in the negative: some repair train will not be allowed to fit into the schedule of passenger trains. Another thing is if the train belongs to the Glavspetsremstroy trust.

The second question is: will the repair train be able to keep up with the Red

Arrow? And again the answer is negative: the repair train cannot keep up with the Red Arrow. This is an ironclad rule. And there is one exception to the rule: if the repair train is from the Glavspetsremstroy trust, then it will overtake any Strela. If required.

4

The Red Arrow is on the road all day: in the morning in Moscow, in the evening

in Leningrad. And

"Glavspetsremstroy-12" - too. Only near Leningrad itself, the repair train was carried not to the Moscow railway station, but slightly to the side. To sidings, to warehouses, to locomotive

depots, to herds of empty wagons. Glavspetsremstroy darted into an inconspicuous, grassy dead end between two brick walls and froze. The car door opened. A friend jumped out onto a broken brick, and

through some

sooty door. And he was. Nobody saw him. There is no one to be here, between the two walls of the factory. There is no one to look at the jumped out comrade. And even if there was someone, all the same - I would not have known. Because our comrade jumped out not in sparkling boots, not in a jacket and breeches, but in an English Austin Reed suit, in F

pulled down over his eyes, with a cloak on his left hand, with a briefcase of crocodile skin - in his right. And he is no longer Comrade Kholovanov at all, but Comrade Beev, a citizen of Bulgaria, a responsible employee of the Comintern. An abandoned workshop,

through broken glass and gravel, he went out to a quiet street, where a kingpin taxi driver was just missing in a big car with

dark glasses.

- In Finnish. -

Understood. Then his trail is lost. I would gladly tell where he went, but, alas, this is not given to me to know. It was possible to find out only that he reappeared twelve days later in the most beautiful city in the world - in Washington. (The reader, of course, understands that there is nothing more beautiful than Kiev. But Kiev is so beautiful that it is simply impossible to compare other cities with it. So: if Kiev is not taken into account, then Washington will be the most beautiful, and only after it — Sydney.)

So, twelve days later, in this very Washington, a certain Mr. Beev knocked with a bronze knob on the mirrored door of the stately building of the headquarters of the Pharaoh and Sons concern on M Street. True, now Mr. Beev was no longer a responsible worker of the Comintern, but a successful Bulgarian businessman. He loved convenience in everything. The Comintern

is the headquarters of the world revolution, therefore it is most convenient to cross the state border of the Soviet Union with a document from this institution. But traveling around America is more convenient not as an emissary of the headquarters of the world revolution, but as a successful businessman. And it's better not to pretend to be a Swede, because you can run into. It is also not recommended to pretend to be Italian. Any American police officer can be Italian. Impersonating a Greek is not the best solution. And if you pass yourself off as an Irishman, it can turn out quite

badly. But how many American police officers speak Bulgarian? And if they turn out to be, then Mr. Beev has the opportunity to dodge. "Yes, I am Bulgarian, but my father and mother are Russians. They fled from the damned Bolsheviks." And there are other twists...

So, the elegant gentleman knocked on the mirror door - the nimble porter flung it open and threw up his hat over his head.

The gentleman went up to the sixth floor. He frankly loved the floors of Washington. He knew the value of marble stairs and bronze lamps. The style of ancient Egypt swept the world. And here are the majestic examples of miraculous architecture: colonnades, as in the temples of Aswan, a bronze pattern in the form of broad leaves and people with dog heads. Soft light streams from nowhere. And generally speaking. The door

opened before him, and he found himself in an office that could well have served as the throne room of Ramses II. A strong, resilient man stood up and held out his hand. Silently shrugged. A responsible worker of the Comintern, he is also a successful businessman, he is also Kholovanov, widely known in narrow circles under the ringing name Dragon, handed his cane to the owner of the office. He accepted it, carefully examined the lion's muzzle of the knob. He took out another one from the closet, the same one. Compared. He returned the cane to Holovanov and gestured for him to sit

down. Not every American is fluent in Bulgarian. Not every resident of Bulgaria speaks English. Therefore, they spoke in Russian: the guest - freely, the owner - carefully choosing words and diligently pronouncing them.

- What is done?

- A lot has been done. Eighty-four American engineers are recruited and sent to build the world's largest aircraft factory in Komsomolsk. Fifty-six engineers were recruited and sent to build a tank plant in Chelyabinsk...

"We call it a tractor," the guest gently corrected. "Yes, of course," the owner agreed. - Eighteen American engineers were recruited and sent to build a tank plant in Nizhny Tagil - yes, I remember you call it a wagon plant. Soon there will be replenishment for the Voronezh and Kuibyshev aviation plants, for the Kharkov tank plant.

- This is good. In addition, there is a need for experts in the field acoustics and sound recording.

- Specialists were easy to recruit when America was in greatest crisis. Now America is coming out of the crisis...

Are you implying
something? - All the same. To reward American engineers in
Russia...

- And
you? -

And me. - American engineers in Russia live as they do not live in
America, and they get as much as they don't get in America...

"And yet the fans have dwindled. -

I'll think it over.

I'll try to find acoustics. In Russia? - In Russia.

But recruit them allegedly for Switzerland, hinting that in Russia
they pay three times more. Make sure that the documents are prepared
for traveling to Switzerland, but that they really want to go to Russia. -
On the way,

acoustic engineers will disappear, and the ends will be in
the water ... - This is not your concern. You will recruit and send
them to Switzerland. The rest is none of your business.

- It will cost more than usual ... - How
much? -

Double.

- I will think. But isn't it too much?

- Find someone

else. - OK. Agreed. And further. I need machines called tape
recorders. - How many? -

Fourty. -

Wow! -

Forty

now. Then more. Do you
know that one tape recorder costs as much as
twelve good cars? - I know. "Forty
tape

recorders is the cost of almost five hundred good cars.

- Yes, sure.

"And ten percent of the deal... mine?" -

As usual. -

Fine. There will be tape recorders.

"For the most part, we are satisfied with your work. Here is your salary for the past months. We are very concerned about your safety and strongly recommend recruiting American engineers not only for Soviet Russia... - We cover ourselves as best we can. But to recruit

specialists for
in other countries the firm is
unprofitable... - You are hinting at the
same thing again.

- I'm hinting again. - Okay, I'll think about it. And the last. How is the main order going?

- By the end of 1938 it will be
ready. - Earlier it
is impossible? -

You can't
do it before. - I'm crying. - You can't do it before. If we knew what we were doing, we could have done it earlier. It is very difficult to do the most complicated thing without understanding what it is for.

- It's really difficult. But these are the terms of the agreement: you do not ask what it is and what it is intended for.

"You know, I figured it out. This is a kind of key to some very complex electrical system that you are creating there, at home, in Soviet Russia. For example, Mr. Stalin creates a spare capital in case of war. All communication systems are pulled somewhere away from Moscow. So that no one could use the spare capital and its communication systems without his permission, he creates an electrical device that is not inferior in complexity to the most advanced encryption machines in the world and at the same time is small in size and fits in a small suitcase or even in a briefcase. In Russia, you cannot order such a device: Mr. Stalin's enemies can find out about this order, the device will be stolen and used against Mr. Stalin, taking control of all the country's communication systems. And in America, you order such a device and are not afraid: the company's experts do not understand the purpose of the device, if they guess that this is the key to something, they still won't be able to use it, because they don't know where the very secret capital with all its communication systems that are opened with this key ... Am I right?

Something flashed in the visitor's eyes that drove the smile from the lips of the owner of the office. Holovanov slowly stood up and silently moved straight at Mr. Stanton with the obvious intention of breaking his jaw. Stanton jumped up to meet the looming threat. With a sharp push under the chin, Holovanov pushed Stanton back. He collapsed into his luxurious chair on wheels. The chair rolled towards the glass cabinet with expensive souvenirs and crashed into it with a clang. - You made a mistake! Understood? You made a mistake. But that's just a guess! - Do you need

money? Here's your money!

Kholovanov opened his crocodile-skin

briefcase and pulled out a tight wad of dollars. He tore the shirt on Stanton's chest, put the pack in his bosom: here you are, if it's not enough! Here's more and more! He lifted the briefcase over the frightened American's head and, as if from the back of a dump truck, poured all the contents onto his head: tight bundles of money.

"Do you think my cane is exactly the same as yours?" Wrong! With a sharp movement, Holovanov snatched from the barrel of his cane, as if from a scabbard, a sparkling blade, something between a rapier and a stiletto, with a gesture of an experienced swordsman, knocked Stanton's hands to the sides and rested the edge of the blade on his throat.

- I'll give you as much money as you want. But if you decide to express even to yourself any assumptions about the purpose of the unit, I will pierce you like a frog. All. Work. Pay for early completion separately.

That evening, a successful Bulgarian businessman turned into the sole heir to the Serbian princely family. Eight more days later - into an irresponsible worker of the Comintern, then into Kholovanov, a comrade in sparkling boots, known by the nickname Dragon.

Nastya drew attention: she works on the carpet, throws the instructor with the right grip, and on the balcony where sports equipment is stored, all someone's boots flicker. Maybe I wouldn't have noticed, but the shine is too bright.

Today, after class, I left the locker room into an empty corridor, and they called her.

She turned around: standing in front of her was an uncle in a leather coat. It's good that the corridor is wide, just right for his shoulders to fit. And then sideways to him in the corridor to stand. The boots on him are the very ones that sparkle even in absolute darkness. It's just right to walk through the forest at night, illuminating the road with boots.

- Citizen Streletskaya, a statement was received from Master Nikanor ... - Is he alive? -

He's actually alive.

Getting better. - Tell me if I meet

again - I'll hurt you. - No need to meet him. - Well, good. My name is

Holovanov. -

Very nice. I'm just at work right

now. Goodbye. - I spoke with the director of the Hammer and Sickle.

- With the director? - Nastya did not believe. - With

the director. Here is the paper with his signature. you from office

shop cleaners were promoted to assistant shift foreman. "I don't know anything about production. "You don't

need to understand anything. And in general, now you can go to the factory once a month for a paycheck. If there is no time, they will send you a paycheck at home. The leadership of the Union team invites you to the team. We do not have professional sports and cannot have them. Our sport is amateur, but you have to train day and night, all year round. "Will Hammer and Sickle pay me for this job?" -

Will. If an amateur does not go to work, but only trains, then

what will he live on? Therefore, our factories help amateurs. Any more questions? - Eat. Is your pistol a real Lahti?

Chapter 3

1

Silver plane. Polished to a shine, like Holovanov's boots. On board in red sweeping letters: "Stalin's route." Will we fly this plane? - This is how we fly. -

Wait, aren't you the same
Holovanov who flies to the

Pole? - The same one. - And there is another famous Holovanov, who breaks

records on a

motorcycle. - There is also such Holovanov. - Your brother? - No, it's me. - And on

a horse - your brother? No,

I'm on the
horse myself. -

It's clear. - It is necessary,
Nastya, to wrap yourself
in furs. We

fly to the Crimea, but at the height - one hell of a frost. We don't have heating. And it's time to switch to "you", I'm a simple person. I'm not very difficult either.

2

The laughter girl got caught by her partner. With great experience. 215 jumps, including 73 long jumps.

- So, Nastya. They prepared me alone for a long jump at the aviation parade. Now they have decided to leave us as a couple. I'll get you up to speed quickly. You just listen to me. Look, this device was created by the creative genius of the Soviet people and its glorious

designers. It is called RPR-3. We raise the chickens. We place the device under a glass cap. We press the button, pump out the air. Imagine that you were thrown from four thousand, and you need to open up at two hundred ... - At two hundred?

Who opens up at two hundred after four? - At two hundred heroes are revealed. For example me. If you're afraid tell me right away. - Not

afraid. - That's right. There is nothing to be afraid of. We are not on the Soviet parachutes. On American. But with a Soviet device.

- Is it possible to turn off the speed if you fly from four, and open up at two hundred? - Can. If you open up

right. – How do you open up exactly right at two hundred? The technology will help you. I repeat. The RPR-3 device was created by the creative genius of the Soviet people. I understand about genius. Tell me

how it works. – It works simply. The higher we climb, the lower the air pressure. And when we descend from a height to the ground, the pressure increases. The device is triggered by air pressure. As soon as you reach the height you need, it will work. But the air pressure changes. – Before jumping, we consult with meteorologists and

make appropriate amendments. - Clear.
- Now

we put the device under a glass cap and pump out the air. We follow the scale. This is the pressure at an altitude of four thousand. Here you are flying. Here the pressure rises. Three thousand passed. Passed two. One. Eight hundred. Six hundred. Four hundred. Three hundred. Two hundred. Op! The device

slammed. Looks like he fired a double shot. Like a spring a powerful mousetrap slammed shut. -

Clever? - Cleverly. What if...it doesn't work? - You are a fiery fool. It also has a redundant mechanism. - And if...

- Sheep is dumb. What is the name? RPR-3. Created by a creative genius... Three mechanisms independently of each other. You heard a double shot, but there were not two, but three. Sometimes they merge into two, and sometimes into one. Your device has been tested five hundred and sixty-seven times, and each time all three triggers have worked. If you don't believe me, you have the right to call an instructor and a designer. In your presence, the experiment will be repeated as

many times as you like. – Did they test

your device too? - Six hundred and forty-one times. There was one refusal.

Two triggers worked, one failed. I don't need all three of them. One is enough for me enough.

- And jumped?

- Jumped. Let's start together tomorrow. Just look, the main thing in our business is not to chill.

From childhood, the Firebird learned the rule: just don't hlyuzdit. In the highest circles, the girl grew up. Nastya's dad was the commander of many diamonds. So daddy's friends will gather, they will get drunk with brandy and they will switch to an incomprehensible language: "Well done, Andrei Konstantinovich, you don't get cold in front of Tukhachevsky himself."

Where did the big bosses have non-military terms, Nastya the Firebird could not understand. I asked the teacher at school, Anna Ivanovna, what kind of word it was. Anna Ivanovna, such an intelligent woman, raised her eyebrows in surprise and was indignant. "Ah, Nastenka is an excellent student, the pride of the whole school, but you don't know such simple things. The time will come - you will go to kichman, forgive me, - to a prison, you will thunder bowlers through the zones, but you don't understand human language. To chill is to be afraid. This is an old joke, but how can a child learn new things if he does not know the old. And remember, girl, there is no need to fuss in this world. Anna Ivanovna

dragged on Belomorina, looked into the distance under heaven and added: "It's better not to be cold."

They threw from four.

Below, the sea sparkles with a million mirrors. Spit sand for the horizon lay. We set the triggers to a very short deceleration.

Holovanov himself in the cockpit. His plane is R-5. White silk scarf parachuting downwind with a train. Raised four thousand. Smiled. - Well, girls, get

out on the plane. And don't whine. a little that, hands off. This is so

clear. Not the first time the instruction is repeated. Got

out on the plane. Nastya - on the left. Katka - on the right. -

Ready? -

Ready. -

Wait a little. So. Went. Both slipped off the wings. Fell into the sky.

4

Dropped again from four. On automatic disclosure is now at three. They fly.

Nastya was overwhelmed with wind, like a ship's sail. Scary Nastya. Grabs the ring. It is not a ring at all. It's just called a ring. In fact, the frame is metal. With a rope. Hands are laid to the sides. But Nastya no, no, yes, she will touch the ring. Is it here? It is here. Flying for eternity.

Nastya no longer hoped that the device created by the creative genius of the Soviet people ... and how it shoots! The crunchy dome was torn out of the knapsack, blown overhead, and he slammed, overflowing with air. Nastya examined the dome: well filled. There are no overlaps, no weaving, no twisting on the lines. Now look around: is there any chance of flying into someone else's dome with your feet? There is no such possibility. Turned around on the slings: is there a danger of a collision? And there is no such danger. Katya flies nearby, laughing:

- Tomorrow we will open up at two thousand.

5

Revealed at two thousand. Both side by side. Strictly

Holovanov: take your time. Success must be reinforced. Ten jumps with opening at two thousand. Then, little by little, we will open up further. For the company and Holovanov sometimes jumps third with them. In the evenings, after jumping on a sandy spit, they make a fire. Before

the sky itself.

Throws out a sea of chocks, branches, logs. For years, these logs and chocks lie on the banks. Dry. And then they fall into the fire of the Union team. They say that chocks smell of iodine. They say salt. Something else smells, they say. No matter what they say, but the fire smells like the sea. And Nastya by the fire. And the whole team is here. Songs until dawn:

***An order was given: to him - to the
west, to her - in the other direction.***

And then:

***On the Don and in Zamosc
White bones are smoldering...***

They also sang their songs, special, landing:

***Crawl out onto the plane Co-bi-
raetsya With a
parachute Man.***

Towards morning the obscene ones came closer. Katka is the very first. She sang such songs that the whole team frightened the seagulls with laughter. And they danced until dawn.

Threw from four with disclosure on two. The dome slammed, and Nastya hovered over the sea. But Katya didn't slam. Katka slipped past and down, down, down. Turning into a dot. How can Nastya help? The parachute is open, and there is no way to catch up with Katya on it. Katya can only be helped by shouting. And Nastya shouts: - Rip! Katka! Rip! Break the ring!

On the ground, Katya laughs. And Holovanov laughs. And the whole team laughs. Katya is already trained. Her device was cocked not for two kilometers, but for two hundred meters. To scare Nastya. Nastya already thought that Katya had crashed. Everyone laughs. Nastya alone cannot come to her senses. Heart not iron.

- Okay, okay, Nastya, you will someday fly almost to the very ground without revealing yourself, you will scare beginners yourself. Go have a rest. We won't scare you anymore. Tomorrow we jump again from four, but the opening is a kilometer away. It's not a pound of raisins. Go get mentally prepared. Are you afraid to open up on a kilometer? - I'm not afraid.

7

They threw from four. Opening per kilometer. At a kilometer, Katya's dome slammed, and Nastya flies down, turning into a dot. Now it's Katya's turn to shout. - Nastya, open up! Open up, fool! Rip your hands! Hands! You can't help her. Katka hung on a parachute - you can't fly faster. And Nastya, without revealing herself, - to the earth, to the earth, to the earth. And from the ground they yell at her: "Tear! Nastya! Rip!" Does not react.

At two hundred, all three machine guns worked for her. The dome slammed. Here and earth.

Calls Holovanov. "Did you put it on two hundred yourself?" - Herself.

"Scare us all?" - Yeah.

– But

you don't have practice even at eight hundred meters
open up. - Now

it is. Immediately two hundred. - This

is good. For gross violation of discipline from jumping
I remove. I am expelled from the team.

Chapter 4

1

Nastya walks along the desert spit. Noisy waves. Domes in the sky. IN sky gliders and planes.

And she has nothing to do. And she has nowhere to go. He sits on the shore, throws pebbles into the water. Or lay down and stare into the distance. Like a homeless cat. And she has nothing to eat for the third day. A cat would catch mice. And Nastya is not trained to catch mice.

Because he just sits and looks at the sea. And no one around. But I slept off for many months and for many months ahead. No one interferes - lie down on the stones and sleep. Blankets are not needed. Warm. Lies. In the memory of the article of the charter goes over.

Pebbles rustled behind. I looked back. The little man is not visible, because in the rays of the sun. Only the boots are visible. Boots of unbearable brilliance. She did not raise her eyes. Why raise your eyes? She already knows whose boots they are.

And she didn't say anything. What to talk about?

He spoke:

"What are you doing here?

- I admire the world.

- Do you want to eat? -

No. Well, you have character. To this she

remained silent. "I have character too, you know. And send you to hell.

But I gave a hundred American parachutes for you. It turns out that I just drank them away, squandered them. I fly in the sky and look out for you. You couldn't have gone far. From our parachutes. - Could not.

- Then let's

go. - Where? -

Jump.

2

We started everything from the very beginning: we jumped from four with an instant opening, then from four with a three-fold opening. On two. At a kilometer. We got to 200 meters. At first,

Holovanov himself took out four thousand. Then he was summoned to Moscow on unknown matters. His assistant took him out. But it was better with Holovanov. - What kind of fool

pulls such a person in the midst of training for nothing? "You fool, do you even know who he

is?" - Holovanov and Holovanov. Record

holder. - Oh, stupid Nastenka. Kholovanov

is Comrade Stalin's personal pilot. And a bodyguard. They don't call him Dragon for nothing.

3

field from horizon to horizon. Concrete strip across the field. At the strip - a tribune for the leaders. Above the podium is an awning: blue and white stripes. There are guards around the stands.

The leaders will appear in three days. And the podium is guarded. In three days, everything on this side of the runway will be crowded. And the lane will remain free. And everything beyond the strip will be free. Over that side of the field, fighters will turn loops, paratroopers will fall there in separate snowflakes and snowfall. Air parade, in a word. The invincible power of the Motherland. Unbending Wings of the Soviets. Until then, preparation. Soldiers pull cables. Climbers sit on poles like

woodpeckers, tap

with hammers, adjust loudspeakers-bells. The giant crane removes the stalls from the car bodies and arranges them in a neat row. "Beer - water", "Ice cream", "Soyuzpechat". Again "Beer - water." Craftsmen carpenters make a toilet out of plywood shields. Giant toilet. The largest in Europe.

But the main concern is safety. Herds were brought from Moscow
Chekists.

Training. In appearance - just guys in caps, in jackets, in striped T-shirts. It seems that they are not even Chekists. Take a closer look -

They.

And the command over the field: "Ra-a-a-get out!" It seems that there was a crowd, like an uncontrollable horde, but r-r-time - and they sorted it out in chains-rulers. Longitudinal human chains to the very horizon. And to the other one too. More cross chains. Human chains form squares with their interlacing. Boxes. Armature of the crowd. The people of Moscow will flood into the Tushino field, and among the people - chains of Chekists. From north to south, from west to east. You won't see them in the crowd. And now they are still training without a crowd: get up - disperse. Each chain has its own leader. Each square has its own. Every boss has a telephone receiver in his pocket. When the crowd fills the field, each commander in the crowd, in a crush, imperceptibly connects his phone to the underground cable either to the "Beer - Water" stall, or to some other stall. No wonder the cables are hung to the stalls.

Closer to the podium of the leaders - the chains are thicker, the boxes are denser. At the very stands, the chains are completely impenetrable. Like a Macedonian

phalanx. Under the very government platform is the commentator's cabin. So the commentator is seated so that he can see the planes, and the paratroopers, and the face of Comrade Stalin. To, then, react, if anything. Next to the commentator is Holovanov's place. And he will see the planes, and parachutes, and the crowd, and the face of Comrade Stalin. Holovanov has difficult duties. Look Comrade Stalin in the face. And into the sky. And into the crowd. Also on the commentator. On the side of Comrade Holovanov - "Lahti" L-35. This is if the commentator suddenly becomes furious and starts shouting all sorts of abominations into the microphone: so that he does not shout for a long time, so that he can be immediately resolved with a single shot between the eyes. Holovanov also has a switch in his hand: he rules who has the connection in his hands. Whoever has a connection can transmit commands. Who sends commands, he commands the parade. No wonder Comrade Lenin recommended to seize the telegraph in the first place. So, the connection is in safe hands. A knife switch in hand in case the enemies burst into the booth and start transmitting the wrong commands to the crowd into the microphone. In this case, Holovanov will pull the switch and the entire communication system with one

crushed by electric shock. Better no connection than to give it into the hands of the enemy.

Right next to the booth in which the commentator and Holovanov will sit, there are three Chekists. In appearance - microphone techniques. In fact, they are in order to make a hole in Holovanov if he gets mad and he decides to shout nasty things into the microphone. Their weapons are under their jackets. Jackets stick out on their butts. Their weapons are without any pretensions. You can't get foreign Lugers, Colts and Lahti for everyone. Therefore, their weapons are ordinary native "Teteshniks". Neither the decoration of the "teshnik" is elegant, nor does it look overseas. One thing is good: it hits powerfully and accurately. Reliable thing TT. Never

will let you down.

But if one microphone technician misfires when shooting at Kholovanov, he will pull the shutter and immediately calm Holovanov with another cartridge. In the meantime, he will distort, another comrade will punch Holovanov with eight holes. That's why it is attached next to the first. Well, if he also has a jamming or a skewed shutter, then the third comrade from Kholovanov will make a sieve. But this is for the most extreme case. And in a normal situation, just that all three of them will put eight rounds into Holovanov, change magazines - and each of them eight more. In the meantime, they smile at Holovanov.

And he smiles at them. Those three are respectful: Stalin's personal pilot. Don't joke with that. On the other hand, if ordered tomorrow, Stalin's personal pilot will turn into an ordinary client with a small inlet in the back of the skull and a large outlet in the frontal part. It may be the other way around. You can fall into the clutches of Comrade Holovanov and turn into his client ... Therefore, it's better not to quarrel with him yet, but smile: how are you, dear comrade?

There are hours. The sun is merciless. The airfield is dusty. The workout continues. Holovanov on the phone command circular: block! This means that no one will move from one box to another. Release to the north! And this is understandable: in each

let the people out of the box in a northerly direction, but do not let them out into the others. Release the lock! This means that the crowd will not feel the presence of the Chekists at all - go in any direction. And again: block! To the south - let go! So you can control a millionth crowd. There will still be pickup trucks nearby. Just a little bit - you can transfer an armed group through the crowd to any point of the airfield. If the telephone connection fails, then the control over the KGB chains will not be violated. Then the commands

will be transmitted in a different way. Silent gestures in chains. And imitation of the one standing in front. A kid was placed next to the commentator's booth. Above him in the entire NKVD is not to be found. If Holovanov orders him to sit down, he will sit down. Then everyone who sees him also sit down. And everyone who sees them will sit down. Why sit down? For discipline. Is there anything that can happen? How little is the situation? And there is no connection. So follow the silent commands. Follow any commands. Any!

Do what is ordered. Because the commands from the glass booth are pouring in: get up, sit down, lie down, get up, sit down, disperse, stand up! Near the empty field, two

laughing girlfriends are walking. Katka and Nastya. Before jumping with their record, they just came to the field to see where to land. And they are all funny. Hee hee ha ha ha. And they show the horns to Holovanov. They do not understand that Holovanov's soul hurts for them. Absolutely

stupid. They don't understand anything at all. And the risk is considerable. They need to be insured somehow.

5

Nastya and Katya are walking all over the field. The faces of the Chekists are writhing. Katya would have to laugh. But Nastya no, no, yes, and she will remember the upcoming jump.

- You, Katya, do not get cold? -

Yes, I jumped long when you were still mastering styling. You would not be afraid, you would not rush ahead of time, you would not open up on

five hundred.

Here Katya caught a funny beetle in the grass. Well, so funny she forgot about the upcoming jump and was already laughing without ceasing.

6

- You know, girls, Soviet technology is the best in the world. But let's insure ourselves also German. In addition to the Soviet device RPR-3, we will additionally give you a German device. Insurance is good, double is better, triple is better than double, and we will add more. with a different operating principle. With a stopwatch. The device is German, and the clockwork in it is Swiss. Rolex. Good luck.

7

Got out on the plane. Katya - on the right, Nastya - on the left. Smiled at the pilot. That four fingers in a leather glove shows: exactly four I keep thousands. And waved his hand. The girls slipped into the abyss.

Chapter 5

1

A million-strong crowd looks up at the
sky. And Comrade
Stalin. and

Holovanov. The penultimate number of the program. Holovan's
responsibility. After that, a massive jump. But that is no longer his concern.
Well, the air parade went well. Not a bitch, not a hitch. Remained protracted
with four thousand and a massive final.

Everything is steeper and steeper the plane takes. And it's leveled out.
The engine held. From the ground you can clearly hear how the roar of the
engine stopped. The announcer sits opposite Holovanov, with a joyful voice
announces to the

crowd: - The height is four thousand meters above sea
level. It was only then that Holovanov realized that both would break.

2

Nastya slides into the void. Tears her air flow, like a mountain waterfall.
Fun and scary. And it's getting scarier. Everything is different today for some
reason. The feeling is that it's not. The earth is moving too fast. The
chronometer is ticking correctly, and all three triggers are cocked, and from
experience he knows that he still has to fly, but why is the earth rushing
towards him at such a speed? The main thing is not to freak out. The devices
will do everything. The main thing is to contain the fear. Don't let fear escape.
But fear escaped, as a dome breaks out of a knapsack. And Nastya screamed,
as they scream in a dream, when you scream and do not scream, when in a scream there is
salvation: -

Rip! Katka! Rip! And

Katya is nearby. And her face is horrified. And she does not scream - she
yells: - Tear!

And tears the ring itself. And Nastya tears the

ring. But... For Holovanov, time stopped when the plane made a platform and the roar stopped. Time stretched out for Holovanov like an accordion. The seconds into the day became endless. In years. The announcer cut him: **above sea level!**

Everything is simple. Sea level is taken as the reference point. And the plane rose to four thousand above sea level. And smart mechanisms will open parachutes at an altitude of two hundred meters above sea level. And everything has been tested a thousand times on a sandy spit. And that spit is at sea level. Maybe a few meters higher. But here - not a sandy spit in the Crimea. Moscow is here. Tushino airfield. Is Moscow at sea level? It is known from school textbooks: Moscow is one hundred and seventy meters above sea level. This is on average: where a little higher, where a little lower. But in any case, the height is not enough. Parachutes will open exactly two hundred meters from sea level, and it will be too late.

3

Holovanov snatched the microphone from the announcer. Three nearby TT pistols were thrown at him. And he is their eyes. And he gave them obscene

facial expressions: I save the situation! According to the instructions, the Chekists are supposed to shoot. All three drew pistols. The people shied away from them. But no one shoots at Holovanov. A proletarian instinct suggests: something terrible is happening and only Holovanov with a microphone can save the situation. And the Chekists look at Stalin. He would mimic them. He would know them. At the moment, Holovanov would

have been pierced with twenty-four holes. But Comrade Stalin is silent. He does not show any attitude with a look or a gesture. Like a granite statue. Like a steel sculpture. His only name is Stalin! He is not here now, in this vain world. Comrade Stalin's gaze is fixed on the distant past. Holovanov, however, had to wait: both would break or only one. Katka the laughter can be saved. Experienced.

A dome was torn out above one lump, and it slammed, filling with air. Above the other, too, the dome was torn out. He just didn't slam. Did not have time. Holovanov pressed the

microphone button and in a joyful tone: "And the number was shown: "Katya the laughter and a bag of potatoes!" Gee gee! The number was performed by the master of parachuting, the champion of the Union and Europe Ekaterina Mikhailova. And ... a bag of potatoes! Gee-gee-gee!" Cheren face Holovanov. Announcer microphone in the mouth:

continue! The announcer laughed joyfully: and a sack of potatoes! bell

rolled up.

And Kholovanov to a hefty Chekist: "Laugh, you bastard, I'll shoot you!" He got up hefty to his full height and laughed dejectedly: Gee-gee-gee. AND rolled along the Chekist chains: gee-gee-gee. And through the crowd: gee-gee-gee. Holovanov is in a pickup truck. And drove into the field ...

4

Nastya extinguished the dome for the two lower lines. They need to be energetic and pull out quickly. There is no wind, so the dome quickly went out.

But Katya does not extinguish the dome. Lies like a bag of potatoes. According to the instructions, it is necessary to urgently extinguish the dome and drop the suspension system. But Katya is lying, violating the instructions. Nastya runs to her. But the legs don't move. They trudge. Nastya kicked so hard that, it seems, both knees were smashed to smithereens and her feet were shattered. And hips. And the spine is probably broken in ten places. Nastya runs like a clumsy scarecrow: she extinguished her dome, extinguish the neighboring one - this is the instruction. What about extinguishing it? He only filled up a little, not tight, as he should be, but sluggish, like a punctured ball. Stranger

extinguish easier.

With her whole body, arms apart, Nastya rushed at him. The Katkin dome did not bounce. It's just that Nastya faded under Nastya's weight, although Nastya doesn't differ in weight indicators. Now quickly crumple the dome into a ball. And unhook the suspension system. So that the body is not dragged by the wind. Nastya unlocks the locks, she is afraid to

look at Katya.

Here the pickup truck rolled up. From the cockpit - Holovanov. Katya - in a parachute and in the body. And the second parachute there. Nastya by the hand - and into the cockpit. Only then did he look her in the face. And he recoiled - he did not expect to see her alive. By calculation, by logic, Nastya is supposed to be dead. And Katya is alive.

5

Terrible Katya. The body has lost its shape. Body deformed. Bumps and bumps everywhere where they shouldn't be. Before our eyes, the body is filled with blackness, turning into one continuous bruise.

Holovanov is driving. Nastya is nearby. The look is unblinking. Kholovanov marveled: not a word from her, not a tear. Ran out of place. Ran away from the crowd. Ran from screams.

And in the sky - a massive jump. Thousand paratroopers on colorful parachutes. A feast for the eyes.

6

Katya Mikhailova was buried modestly. And covertly. They were buried as it should be to bury paratroopers behind enemy lines. No coffin. In parachute silk. In an unknown place. You can not put a monument on the grave. You can't write a name. The prestige of the state is higher than any individual victims. Only a cross on the map. And the card is safe

place.

Fifty years will pass, full communism will come on the whole earth. There will be no more state borders, all countries will merge into one great family of equal peoples. And then we will remember you, Katya Mikhailova. Fifty years later. It's scary to think: in 1987. And we will put a majestic monument to you on this place. From granite. And we will write in gold letters: "In the line of duty ... when testing the latest technology created by a creative genius ... Katya Mikhailova ... Laughter."

7

The Firebird did not cry at night.

She never cried. Holovanov locked her in a parachute hangar. I warned you not to show up. He brought a blanket, a pillow, soap, a towel, tooth powder, a brush, a comb, a bucket of water, brought five boxes of landing rations. He joked:

- A paratrooper armed with dry rations is

practically immortal. The Firebird did not appreciate the joke. He himself understood:

out of place about immortality. And now Nastya is alone in a huge warehouse.

Under the arch, a winged mouse rushing about. Moon shine in the window.

She hugged the pillow and bit her lips for a long time. Before dawn. Not to cry.

And she didn't cry.

Chapter 6

1

There are rumors on Moscow trams. By markets. By the porches. People argue. They say that a terribly funny number was shown at the air parade: they threw a girl with a parachute and a bag of potatoes from the plane - also with a parachute. A bag of potatoes broke, but the girl is alive and well. That

was laughter! But

not everyone says so. They say there were two girls. One was saved, the other crashed. A bag of potatoes was invented in advance: if something goes wrong, announce that the bag has broken. And there were two of them. They saw with their own eyes. One is experienced. She was saved. And the other one was completely green. Everyone wanted to excel. I jumped.

2

Kholovanov put a neat pile of printed sheets on Comrade Stalin's desk. Operational summary of Moscow rumors for the week. Comrade Stalin at his desk. Is reading. Silent. Zamer Holovanov. Heels together. Socks of sparkling boots - apart. Hands at the seams. Construction stand. It is bad when

Comrade Stalin is silent. Even worse - when he is silent and does not offer to sit down. He sits himself, rustling the pages of the report, forgot about Holovanov. The report is seven pages. Because a week is seven days. 52 operational reports per year. 365 pages.

Comrade Stalin reads, puts aside the pages he has read. First. Second. Third. Comrade Stalin reads the fourth page, and Kholovanov knows what Stalin is reading at that very moment. It's easy to remember what's on each page. Because at the first - the dominant Moscow rumor - that a parachutist crashed on an air parade. And the second page is

same. And the third. And the fourth. And te-de. Only on every page of fantastic details is added. On the first and second day, rumors do not call the skydiver by her last name. From the third day it turns out that the name of the parachutist was either Strelnikova or Strelkova. Moscow only talks about it.

All rumors flock to Holovanov. A special department processes the material, prepares a report, Kholovanov signs the report and comrade Stalin - on the table. And Holovanov would be glad to write a report on some other rumors, and mention the parachutist in passing. Will not work. Except

Holovanovsky report on the Stalinist table - a report on Moscow

rumors from the NKVD. Signed by Comrade Yezhov. And one more from the Central Committee. Signed by Comrade Malenkov. Malenkov does not know what Yezhov is reporting. Yezhov does not know what Malenkov is reporting. Both do not know what Holovanov is reporting. In principle, Yezhov and Malenkov and all their subordinates should not know at all that Kholovanov and his guys are doing the same job. But Holovanov has no access to the reports of the NKVD and the Central Committee. And someone else is reporting to Comrade Stalin. In addition to Holovanov. In addition to the CC In addition to the NKVD. And everything is about the parachutist. So the system was invented so that the sources of information were independent of each other. To have no monopoly.

How can Holovanov lie in this situation? You won't lie at all. Against the background of other reports, your cunning will be highlighted. Therefore, all seven pages of Holovanovsky's report are about one rumor that filled Moscow from underground metro stations to the very stars of the Kremlin. (They reported to Kholovanov in the morning: yesterday three workers were cleaning the red star on the Trinity Tower and everything about the parachutist was chattering ... Information was received not from one source, but from three independent sources at

once ...) With such a formulation of work, go ahead deceive. And Comrade Stalin finished reading, folded the leaves in a pile and then he just remembered the man in the sparkling boots:

"Sit down, comrade Kholovanov.
Sat.

Comrade Stalin got up. He filled the phone. Smoked for a long time. Lighted up. Went to the office. Behind Holovanov. Like a leopard in a cage. Do not hear. Gently puts his paws on the floor. Holovanov feels it with his back. A bloodthirsty beast.

"We are training a million paratroopers, Comrade Kholovanov. And you have disgraced our country in front of the whole world. I understand that they wanted to surprise the whole world. It didn't work out. You tried to make amends for the mistake. You did the right thing when you saw that disaster was inevitable. I really liked how you behaved at the time of the death of a parachutist. You are the only one who reacted decisively, quickly and correctly. Everyone saw that the parachutist crashed. But thanks to your actions, half of Moscow believes that a sack of potatoes has broken. Comrade Stalin was silent. Then he continued: - But the other half of Moscow still believes that a parachutist crashed. That is why we consulted with

our comrades and decided to shoot you, Comrade Kholovanov.

"The right decision, Comrade Stalin," agreed Kholovanov. - Wise and timely. Comrade Stalin picks up the phone: "Give me Yezhov.

Comrade Yezhov, Kholovanov must be shot. "It's high time," the pipe answered. - I have this bastard

full safe of compromising evidence.

Comrade Stalin put down the phone: "Your last assignment, Comrade Kholovanov. Before we shoot you, you have to stop the rumors about the parachutist. Have you thought about how to do it? - I thought, Comrade Stalin. And I decided not only to stop the rumors, but to turn them in our

favor. Comrade Stalin stopped near the window and looked at the star on the Spasskaya Tower for a long

time, on which just three workers had climbed. Little stars. If you look from below. But people in the stars - and even less. Insects. Height, damn it. At the height of only them now and talk about who fell from a height. And you can't stop these rumors. Holovanov proposes to stop and turn in his favor? Interesting. "Go on, comrade Holovanov. - It is impossible to deny that the parachutist crashed. Therefore, I gave the order to the department of spreading rumors: all talk about the death of a parachutist should not be stopped, but encouraged and strengthened.

- Interesting.

- Pay attention, Comrade Stalin, in the first two days they just talked about the paratrooper, without calling her by name. For the past five days, they have not just been saying that the nameless parachutist has crashed, but they are calling her Streletskaya. Mistakenly named. This is my guys job. Without denying the fact of the death of the parachutist, my guys directed the rumors in a different direction. Where they are easy to stop. And turn it to our advantage. It is impossible and stupid to refute the death of some nameless parachutist. But it is easy to refute the death of the parachutist Streletskaya. After all, she is alive and well. Therefore, let Moscow chat about the death of a parachutist for now. But not some kind at all, namely the death of Streletskaya! All attention to Streletskaya personally. The more rumors about her death, the more details, the better. - The Streletsy must be hidden so that no one sees it. - Comrade Stalin, I hid it immediately after what happened. No one, except you, me and Streletskaya herself, knows which of the two paratroopers died. - But someone saw the corpse of the one that really crashed. How is her? Mikhailova.

- The corpse of Mikhailova was closely seen by Streletskaya and I. All. - All right, comrade Holovanov. Fine. - So, if everyone says that it was Streletskaya who died, and suddenly it turns out that she is alive and well, then ... the rumor will be killed. The psychology of the crowd is such that it would never occur to anyone to think of another parachutist. If someone yesterday repeated the false rumor about the death of Streletskaya, then tomorrow he will be put to shame. I suggest and insist: over the next week, bring the rumors about the death of Streletskaya to the highest point, and then show Streletskaya.

-
Where? "Not in the press. It will be suspicious. Show her where she is known and remembered. At the Hammer and Sickle factory. And then in the press. Yes, by

no means. Comrade Stalin picked up the phone again:
"Give me Yezhov. Comrade Yezhov, we have consulted with comrades and decided not to shoot Holovanov for the time being.

- That-va-ri-schi! Today we are facing our famous polar pilot, world-class motorcycle racer, highly qualified rider, parachutist, then-a-a-a-v-comrade Kholovanov!

It seemed that the ceiling of the workshop and the overhead crane had collapsed. The ovation raged until the palms fell off. Holovanov comes out, but not in a polar jacket, not in high fur boots, as polar pilots should go out, but in a red silk shirt, on a silk cord, in sparkling boots, jacket turned over. There are a number of orders on the jacket. Kholovanov understands that the people were waiting for him in furs packed, despite August. So in the popular imagination, a polar pilot is drawn - and a polar bear is nearby. And realizing this, Holovanov did not go in what was expected, and pleased those people. The unexpected attracts more attention. Especially the female half of the workforce liked his red shirt. They clapped their

hands. And the peasants liked Holovanov for his shoulders wider than the closet, for his height, for his hands, with which the horse's hind legs

catch, for the ease of walking.

Holovanov did not come out onto the platform - he took off. It doesn't seem to have any weight. And with knives on the platform - boom-boom. They thought it would reach the middle, stop, take out the paper. No! Dudki! Not this way. Holovanov only took off onto the platform - and he is already telling the story. Goes - says. He says - like he sings a song and seems to play along with himself on the harp. And the voice is a factory whistle: at least sing arias, at least command a division. I didn't even reach the middle of the platform, and the people died to tears. It sprinkles with jokes like sparks. From the sparkling breed. Sparkling.

Kholovanov seized the attention of the crowd like a stubborn mare by the bridle. Now it won't release. And the people like it. People like it when strength is in a person. When the power is over the edge. He bends his hand in a chopping gesture, and under the scarlet silk the steel balls roll. And the neck - what does your bully have. Such a collar that it's better not to fasten the collar, you can't fasten it alone. And the people also feel that the strength of the soul in this person is even greater. So it splashes. And Holovanov with the crowd, as with an animal, either caresses, or lashes with a whip: either jokes, jokes, or how he wraps up about the intrigues of enemies. Instantly, the crowd is filled with severe anger. Something about the politics of the beloved party - here he gets a standing ovation, like he himself is the whole party.

They applaud him as they would applaud the native party, which leads the people to bright horizons. And he is about the most beloved of people, about the one who does not sleep at night, is rooting for the people. Here the hall is in hysterics. And he is from high notes and again in jokes. He tells, and in response to him, then an explosion of laughter, then applause, as many as the

windows ring. And laugh again. Cheerful friend. Explanatory. He told a lot. About planes, about horses, about motorcycles, about polar bears: here they carried out of the workshop those who laughed to hiccups, to a nervous shudder.

And most of all he talked about parachutes. Completed. Tired myself. Laughs

himself. He wipes his forehead with a satin handkerchief. - Any questions? Hands shot up over the crowd, like spears over the horde of Genghis Khan. Holovanov's hand is a sign to the old grandfather, who has probably been in this workshop since the

time of Alexander II, - they say, your question, dear comrade grandfather. Grandfather cleared his throat sedately, smoothing his

mustache: "Tell me, son, when paratroopers fall from heaven, don't their heads spin?" "No," Holovanov slashed. - We, the Soviet paratroopers, never turn their heads! - Applause

thundered for such an answer. - Our asses are just spinning. The shop shook from the foundation to the roof. Pigeons in the yard fell off the cornices, just as they break off during a cannon shot. And for a long time people rolled on the floor. Not all. Only who is lucky. Not everyone is burned out on the floor to ride, because there is nowhere to stand. People are standing on the benches, the cornices are plastered along with the pigeons and the

overhead crane. Two even sit on a hook and sway like martyrs on wood. The joke must be said so that it suits. Tell someone else, well, they would have laughed. And here the polar hero jokes in sparkling boots, with military orders, in

solemn silence. Jokes well. According to ours. In a working way. In a word, they would have laughed further if Holovanov had not extended his hand to the guy with the insolent muzzle - they say, your question, dear comrade.

And he blurted

out: - Everything is fine with you, comrade parachutist, but here in our workshop Nastenka Streletskaya the floors of chalk, lured her into your parachutes with beautiful words. She is no

more, Nastenka. The crowd froze in half-breath. A dove beats its wings under the roof - you can hear it. The year in the yard is one thousand nine hundred and thirty-seven. Such impudence... The hall froze. The crowd was turned into ice blocks.

All numb at once. - Provocateur, - quite quietly, looking at his feet, as if to himself said the one in gray. He spoke softly, but heard. And

he louder: -

Provocateur.

And suddenly he screamed in an evil voice:

"Provocateur! And the first on the provocateur - claws in the face. Like hooks. AND everyone standing around - on a provocateur. Rip

it! And they would

break. But Holovanov held out

his hand: - Stop! If a citizen is to blame, then do not torment him, like a leopard torments his victim, but deliver him where he should! Find out with whom he is connected, who sent him, who taught him how to ask provocative questions, who pays him money. Tear the weed, so with the root! And generally speaking. Whose mill are you pouring water on, citizen!? I order! Standing next to him, close the ring! So that not a single hair falls from his head. Now let's finish the rally, I myself will deliver this subchik in my car where it should be. The

advanced class-conscious workers have closed around the insolent man. Wall in four directions. An impenetrable square. Box. - The Soviet court will issue you a measure. Only who to you, citizen provocateur, said that Nastya Streletskaya crashed?

And he, with a muzzle tattered, haughtily akimbo: - Yes, all of Moscow is talking! Then

they rushed to him from all sides: beat the bastard!

But those who are around the impudent little box, showed consciousness - they covered it. And Holovanov to the crowd:

- You can't kill him! By killing the provocateur, we thereby interfere with the investigation. And one more thing: everyone shout, and there are those among you who believed the rumor that Nastya Streletskaya had crashed. I honestly confess to you, comrades, that I am also a sinner. Heard enough of all sorts of conversations and hung his nose. Good girl. Yes, many people here know it. And I know her. They jumped together. Because when I heard about her death, I became discouraged. And at that time she was performing a responsible government task. I can't say which one. State secret. But I believe that they will soon reward her. The most important order. And yesterday I was going to the airfield, and what do you think? Nastya Streletskaya with a parachute - towards. Well, I say, you crashed, but she laughs! The shop is silent. He is silent, reproachful in a thousand eyes: we will tear the

provocateur to shreds, if it is your will, comrade Kholovanov. And you would be the first to rush at the provocateur and shoot him. So that the people do not bother. But we should not be deceived. You yourself saw: the girl crashed. And many knew her here in this shop. It is your right to kill a provocateur, comrade Holovanov, and it is not befitting to lie to the people. Even the polar hero. "All right," Holovanov says. Moscow does not believe in tears and does not believe in words. I knew you wouldn't believe me. Because Nastya

Streletskaya brought with him. Nastyuha, well, go to your own shop. Show yourself to the people.

And Nastya came out. The workshop gasped with a single gasp. People yelled, stomped, splashed their hands. - Nastya! Is that you? N-nastenka! Nastasya Andreevna, you are our parachute pride! Beauty is invisible! Puffed up, she doesn't show herself to her native shop! Here she is! Look at her! But what the bastards were talking about!

They laughed and clapped. They clapped and laughed. And the portly aunts, so they cried: she is a fool, she is a fool, now she has escaped, so next time she will break. Celestial fool, but all the same it's a pity. And Holovanov threw up his hand: "Comrades! Here is an

example of the enemy's deceit: "All Moscow is talking." And hang up your ears! And you believe more! Where is our revolutionary proletarian vigilance? When the enemy speaks openly, everyone is indignant. And if the same enemy whispers into your ears on trams, then you listen. Am I telling the truth? "True," they agreed.

"That bastard whispered to you here, but no one stopped him, no one pulled out his tongue!"

- Yes, we see him for the first time, comrade Kholovanov! He is not ours. - So, sent! Keep there?

- Hold on! the class-conscious workers answered in thirty gulps. "Our revolutionary duty is to prevent youngsters like him from fooling our heads. Our duty - provocateurs and whisperers - to the wall! Take him to my car this very hour. Yes, watch out. Together we will deliver wherever.

- We'll deliver! - thirty sips answered. - And to all of you, dear comrades, the workers of the Hammer and Sickle plant, the Soviet paratroopers asked to convey their fiery greetings right from under the skies!

4

The driver opens the door to the car. Holovanov and Nastya sit in the back seat. Holovanov has a Lahti L-35 in his hands - pointed at a provocateur. The provocateur was tied with trouser belts, ropes, chains - everything that came to hand was thrown at the feet of Nastya and Kholovanov. The running boards of the car are plastered with conscientious workers. And the second car behind them is overloaded with them. For protection. We left the factory without difficulty - in honor of the arrival of Holovanov, there were a lot of police, the crowd was pushed back, cars were let through.

We drove off. Holovanov hides his Lahti in a holster. The holster fastens. The conscious workers unleash the provocateurs. He rubs his swollen hands. He climbed into the middle seat, wiping the make-up off his face with a handkerchief. To him from the footboard someone in gray:

- Comrade Shirmanov, I didn't spoil your face much? - All right, - and to Holovanov: - Well, how can I ask you a question, comrade Holovanov?

- All right, Shirmanov. Fine. And your guys did a great job. To all of them on my behalf - one day off out of turn.

5

Rumors in Moscow: sent by Trotsky because of the cordon of a gang of whisperers of liars. For one "Hammer and Sickle" alone - a hundred. Whisperers lied like that - ears wither. It was said that the authorities threw a Soviet girl, alive, without a parachute, from under the very sky. And the girl is alive and well. Strelkov. Or Strelina. Sheptunov was taken last night. On the Hammer and Sickle, everyone with a tongue larger than the standard was caught. There were

two hundred of them. More precisely, two hundred and five. Five paratrooper Holovanov caught right at the factory. Flew to the pole. Let me, he thinks, I'll jump to the factory, but I'll catch one liar. And what do you think? I jumped with a parachute and - grab one. Grab another. In half an hour - five. He tied everyone up with one parachute... And they took the others at night. But those are already in the usual order. From beds. Warm. And they took it from other factories. Three thousand. Or four. Serves right.

6

The summer day is over. Sunset. Pines. Country house. Long table. Tablecloths and napkins are starched to a crisp. Silver. Crystal. Bouquets of gladioli as fireworks bursts. The big fat cook looks around the table for the last time. Picky. The waiters are in non-stop motion.

There is such a water beetle on long legs - I don't know what it's called - the water bends under its paws, but it doesn't fall into the water itself. And it does not run on water, but glides. This is how waiters work at the festive table. Glide. On long legs.

Slightly aside - the leaders. Wait respectfully. They are waiting for Comrade Stalin. He is here. On the lawn. But he apparently forgot that the table was set. And slowly walks to the forest and back. Next to him is a parachutist girl. Nastya the Firebird. Comrade Streletskaya. She proves something. Stalin is listening. Objects. Agrees. No one

dares to interrupt their conversation. And they again went from the dacha to the forest. The conversation is serious. Talk about parachuting. On the mass training of paratroopers for the coming liberation war. We need parachutes. You need a lot of parachutes. We need special parachute factories. And silk mills

needed. And parachute depots. It's not easy to store parachutes. Temperature, humidity and all that. And parachute dryers are needed. And repair parachute workshops. We

need new parachute clubs. Tens of thousands of instructors are needed. We need air transport. We need dive bombers that, with a sudden strike, will suppress enemy airfields and open the way for heavy transport aircraft. A million skydivers. And in addition to thousands of airborne brigades, divisions and corps, we need small elite airborne units that will cut the people of the airfield even before the raid of our dive bombers, before our first strike, before the start of the war. Elite women's divisions? Of course, women! A woman will do fine work better. It's one thing if, before the start of the war, huge men with machine guns appear in the area of \u200b\u200bthe enemy airfield - these will frighten the whole district. Another thing is fragile girls.

Armored fist - in a velvet glove. Disguise. As the Field Manual requires. PU-36. A million men - then. After the suppression of airfields, and first ... And suddenly Stalin's

question: - Were you friends? She caught

her breath. Nastya understands that he is talking about Katya. She remembered Katya the laugher, and suddenly her eyes filled with tears. She understands that if she bursts into tears here now, she will be forgiven. Maybe the question is such that she burst into tears. To ease the soul. And she doesn't want to cry at all. Therefore, he tries to blink his eyelashes quickly, quickly. And he knows: just say one word now - and that's it. And not hold back the tears. Because Nastya did not utter any words.

She just nodded her head. I bit my lips. Looking past him. She nodded lightly. Because you don't nod too hard. Because the head must be held high. You should always look at the tops of the trees, then you get such a proud view. And you also need to look at the tops of the trees and do not nod your head strongly when you need to keep the tears on the tips of your eyelashes. So she didn't even nod, but rather showed that yes, they were friends. And the eyes are higher and to the side. AND

knows that if he takes her now and gently hugs her, pressing her to him, then she will burst into tears on this shoulder. Away, at the

table (not coming up to the table) - the best people in the country. Comrade Molotov. Comrade Mikoyan. Comrade Khrushchev. Comrade Yezhov. Some other comrades. They understand what the conversation is now. That's why they don't interrupt. That's why they don't look at the lawn where Nastya and Stalin walk. But everyone sees. And they understand that it is at this moment - about Katya. Why is he talking about Katya? It would be better about airfields. She would have told that at the first moment of the war, or rather, a few minutes before it began, it was necessary to cut the airfield guards. And airfield anti-aircraft gunners. And at dawn the sleeping pilots cut. It is also necessary to cut communications in the airfield area, then their fighters will not take off and our bombers will bomb without hindrance ...

But he was less interested in that. He took it and hugged her lightly, hugging her to him. Here she burst into tears.

7

Dinner went on for a long time. There was a lot of wine. There were many jokes. She sat on the right hand of Stalin and kept looking at him. She saw him very close. Near. I watched with gratitude. After all, he asked her about parachuting out of courtesy. He knows parachute problems better than any instructor. He knows that our Soviet parachute is better than the American one. Of course better. But he also knows everything about the American parachute with a green label, with a silkworm on the cobweb. He knows that for some reason Soviet pilots and paratroopers are ready to give up seven Soviet parachutes for one parachute with a green label. The price is seven. He knows this price. She understood

that it was impossible to sit and look at him all. That's why I looked at everyone. And then so quickly - on him. So that no one saw.

He was the first who realized that she needed to cry. At the moment. From feelings of excess. Well, please. Here's my shoulder. Didn't even calm down. Roar for health. Sobbing. The guests will be waiting.

The guests waited. And dinner was not very late. Some kind aunt, seemingly a housekeeper, took Nastya away. Washed. She gave me cold water to drink. Good water at Stalin's dacha. Cold and generally special. And here again - next to Stalin. He offered wine. She refused: I don't drink, Comrade Stalin. Didn't force. Everyone else - yes. The rest, to put it mildly, he forced: well, Comrade Yezhov, why are all the glasses on your edge of the table dry? A blue evening crept into Stalin's

dacha like a Baghdad thief. The noise got bigger. Laughter. The music was turned on. Lanterns were lit on the veranda. And the waiters slide by cars without getting tired. It looks like they are skating past. With a slight whistle. Comrade Kalinin Mikhail Vanyuch kept looking at Stalin. And Stalin, no, no, and yes, he will show him that, they say, it's not time yet. Everything that was on it

disappeared at once from the table. The waiters pulled off the top tablecloth. Below it is another. Also blind. In the dark, blue and the blue tablecloth is seen. Dessert. The waiters arranged what was supposed to be and disappeared all at once. It seems that there were never any of them either at the dacha, or on the near approaches to it, or on the distant ones. Comrade Stalin is a sign to Comrade Kalinin: it's time. Comrade Kalinin was just waiting for that sign. He immediately has a red box in his hands, who knows where.

Stalin got up. All quieted down. Even the grasshoppers on the lawn all at once stopped chirping. -

We here with comrades consulted, and decided award our paratrooper with the Order of Lenin. Comrade Kalinin...

Mikhail Vanyuch smiles, awards the order. He shook his hand. Then not he restrained himself, hugged him, pressed him to himself: wear it, daughter, you deserve it.

They surrounded Nastya from all sides. Congratulations, handshake. Nastya turned out to be in the ring.

Aside - only Stalin. Immediately next to him - Holovanov. Where it came from - no one can explain. I myself, frankly, do not know where. Just picked up and showed up. It's in his nature to appear out of nowhere.

And Comrade Stalin said to him quietly, so that no one else could hear: - In control.

Chapter 7

1

The car has a long, long hood. The headlights are like spotlights on a cruiser. In the front seat - the driver and the head of security. The front seat is open - this is so that the head of security on the sides can look back, so that the security cars can honk in case of emergency. From open space and shoot handy. The salon is closed. The salon is like a princely carriage: the floor is either a carpet, or a white soft skin, the walls, seats, curtains are ashen. Satin upholstery, quilted. America knows how to finish car interiors. The glass and curtains are so thick that the noise of Moscow remains on the other side of the window.

People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, General Commissar of State Security Ezhov Nikolai Ivanovich stretched out his legs. At Stalin's dacha, dinner ended at half past four. Dawn is coming soon. And Nikolai Ivanovich's working day continues. Interrogations until noon. Then a short sleep, in the evening a ball and a meeting during the ball. Nikolai Ivanovich Yezhov

leaned his forehead against the cold glass. Damn Stalin-Gutalin makes you drink every time. Head spin. It will soon pass. The head will pass and the gutalin will be no more force.

Yezhov unbuttoned his collar with two huge marshal's stars, loosened his belt a little, and threw it into the voice tube to the driver: "To Sukhanovo."

2

Nastya hid the box from the order and the order book in her pocket, and held the order in her hand. So I brought him to the parachute

club. And I didn't show it to anyone. Only admires herself, while no one is around. You hold it on your hand, you feel the weight: the main metal is gold, the Lenin profile is platinum. The order is made simply and modestly. And beautiful. Beautiful during the day and moonlit at

night. Nastya settled down on decommissioned parachutes, but she cannot sleep. So the order will turn. Commercials. Glittering gold. A wreath of golden spikelets - many facets. Each one sparkles. And platinum has its own special brilliance, not at all the same as the brilliance of gold. Nastya put the order side by side and suddenly realized that without Stalin, the communist government could not live. If Stalin was killed (for some reason it never occurred to her that he himself might die), then power would be little by little, and then everything would sooner begin to rot and crumble. And she decided...

3

According to the parachute club - a rumor. There was no Streletskaia for several days - everything is clear. Then she appeared. By the very dawn, she was brought up by a long black car - a well-known business. There were already such people here: at first they were late for lights out, then they began to return by dawn, then they began to return in long black cars. Then they stopped coming back... Here is this one - on the same path. No shame, no conscience. Only eighteen knocked. Where is the

boss looking? And that's where the bosses are looking. Everything comes from the boss. Fish, as you know, from the head ... The authorities are not ashamed. Oh, don't be ashamed. Such a young one is being dragged. Look, the bosses got bourgeois cars. Responsible comrades live. You need to shoot the bosses more often. Shoot mercilessly. After all, it is decay. After all, this is a rebirth. Thermidor. After all, it's just a thought. A shame. What is the most important thing in a woman? The main thing is bodily splendor. And in this Streltsy, the main thing just didn't turn out to be. Why, then, does her boss love her? Of course, for flexibility. But you never know in our club girls malleable, but lush! So no, they coveted the skinny one. Debauchery and nothing more. Perversion of taste. And all who? All Holovanov male. Himself uses and delivers to the authorities. Gnawing off his head, in less than three days, Holovanov will arrive in a long black car and take away this same Nastya Firebird forever.

In less than three days, Holovanov arrived in a long black car and took Nastya the Firebird forever.

4

Two in an endless basement. Holovanov is strict. The conversation is serious. –

Do you believe, Anastasia, in social justice? - I believe. - Let's not

argue about names: socialism, communism ... Do you believe that it is possible to build a society on earth in which justice for all will be ensured? - I believe. - That's what I believed. - And now? -

This is not relevant. The main thing

is that you believe. I think you believe, and therefore a new job for you. The founders said that socialism is control. They spoke correctly. In capitalism, everyone has their own bowl, plate or dish. Socialism is a common cauldron and fair distribution. In capitalism there is no one who distributes. Because capitalism is freedom. And a society of social justice should have a class of people who take all public goods under a single control and distribute them fairly. The one who is at the boiler, the one who distributes, receives such power over people that no capitalist can dream of. Socialism is the power of a minority, it is the power of those who stand at the common boiler. Millions of jackals rushed to the common cauldron: it is one thing to create wealth, another to distribute. Jackals like to distribute. Any social justice inevitably gives rise to the power of those who exercise justice. Justice is a subjective category. Those who are near the cauldron decide according to their own understanding what justice is.

- Those who are at the boiler must also be controlled. And shoot more.
- “This is what your job is going to be like now. - I have an enemy biography.
- That's exactly what we need.

- Why? To
keep you under control.

5

Sukhanovo is a former monastery. Near Moscow. Special Detention Facility. If confessions are not knocked out in Lefortovo, then they are sent to Sukhanovo. There is no marriage here. They'll beat it here. Sukhanovo is a birch forest, it is the whistle of birds, it is fresh air.

Sukhanovo is, among other things, a rest home for the top management of the NKVD. The first floor - torture chambers, the second - suites for vacationing Chekists. When the divine melody of the "Amur Waves" sounds on the terraces of the second floor, when women in long dresses fill the second floor, the investigators on the first floor are given a break. For a few hours, let there be no squealing and squeaking of those under investigation, let only the birds sing and immortal waltzes sound. A break has been announced. Ball on the second floor. The

ladies smile at Nikolai Ivanovich Yezhov. Nikolai Ivanovich answers with a smile. Nikolai Ivanovich is in a hurry. Under the torture chambers is a firing cellar. Nikolai Ivanovich knows that all the rooms here can be tapped, only the execution cellar is impossible.

The basement work has already been completed. The basement has already been cleared. Today in the execution cellar there is a short secret meeting: Yezhov, Frinovsky, Berman. We need to quickly resolve two dozen issues. And reappear among the dancers.

- I understand the history of the French Revolution. There was a certain Robespierre in charge of them - the Supreme Being. There was a complete revolutionary order. They cut people's heads, and everything was great. And then the Supreme Being began to cut off the heads of his own ... Well, of course, that one ... his own head was chopped off.

6

"The rule in control is this: everyone can choose any weapon that he likes," the old gunsmith smelled of gun oil for many years. The look is stern: - I have in stock everything that you can think of. Exception: Soviet weapons. We do not use Soviet. - And why? - Nastya the Firebird in any business is the reason

interested. -

Not allowed. An

exhaustive answer. - You

have a collection - you will envy. - You,

girl, if you find it difficult to choose, I would

recommended ... - I

will not be at a loss in choosing. Give me Lahti. - "Lahti"? -

the gunsmith put two teeth forward, which is why

became like an old, wary hare. - "Lahti". "A rare thing." He

stuck out two

teeth even more. - Aren't you afraid that it will be heavy? - Afraid. - Aren't you afraid

that there will be problems with the

supply of

cartridges? - So he has cartridges from Parabellum. What problems? "Right, girl, right. Well

then, follow me. I had only three Lahti. One comrade Holovanov took it, the

other - some other uncle. In general, I only have one "Lahti" left. A coast for some connoisseur and connoisseur, but all Browning or Colt ask. Nastya took Lahti in her hands, estimated the weight. - Heavy? - Heavy. - I thought so. I do not recommend taking. Hand must with a gun

live in love and harmony.

Nastya threw up a beautiful pistol on her hand again and returned with a sigh.

- What's in second place? -

Give me the Luger.

What kind of Luger?

"Parabellum zero eight. - That's another conversation. I have how many of them.

The master opened the green box and took out a brand new black pistol covered in a thick layer of oil.

7

On the open terraces of the second floor - laughter and dancing. Birds sing and charming melodies sound. Extraneous sounds do not disturb the celebration.

Comrade Yezhov's wife said to Comrade Frinovsky's wife: - As soon as Robespierre began to cut the heads of his ...

Chapter 8

1

The Kremlin basement is endless. Warehouse smells. Dry. Chilly. Shelves without end. Clothes and shoes - in bulk.

- Here, girl, boots, here is overalls, boots, a skirt, a tunic, a harness. You will wear scarlet buttonholes. On everyday uniform - without any insignia. Dress uniform - only in your circle. To the dress uniform on scarlet buttonholes - emblems: hammer and sickle. Emblems of the 575th sample. Here they are. This is a fur helmet. Fur boots. Here is an English flying jacket. Sign. Signed.

2

From Severny, Leningradsky, Savelovsky, Paveletsky, Kievsky, Kazansky, Belorussian, Baltic [1], Kursk railway stations - electric trains are full. Every minute. Sweaty crowds. - Why are you poking me in the face, citizen? - Cockerels: blue, red, green!

Cockerels: blue, red, green! - "Spartacus" is long overdue to kick his tail. Does

not work. - Eskimo on a stick! Eskimo on a stick! "Give up your seat, young man!" - Do you know that as soon as Robespierre ...

3

- Listen to the decision of the party: "By the decision of the Secretariat of Comrade Stalin, Anastasia Andreevna Streletskaya was appointed

special courier of the Central Committee of the CPSU (b). Here is yours, Nastya, certificate. - Oh what! "Our

certificates are not printed on paper, but on white silk. Handkerchief seven by seven. "Seven Seven" is the motto and password for the initiates. Silk is used for parachuting, but this has nothing to do with your parachuting fate. Silk is just better than paper. Such a certificate can be sewn into clothes, and no one will grope for it. With such a certificate, you can swim through the rivers and go through the swamps. Then just wash from dirt. The seal of the Central Committee and the signature of Comrade Stalin are not washed off. But remember, a special courier is only an official job title. Only a cover. The position is designed in such a way that it is not clear what you are doing. Go figure out what the special courier of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks is doing. I got it?

- All.

That's all she understands. But we don't. I wonder, for example, where do the special couriers of the Central Committee live? Previously, Nastya lived in a closet. Then - in the flying club on parachutes. A special courier is not supposed to live on parachutes. She doesn't care, but the Central Committee and the General Secretary do care.

- You will have your own cell, Nastasya. Let's go home today. Our train at two o'clock.

- From which station?

- From the Kremlin.

4

The wall moved to the side. An ordinary metro station lobby has opened. Very similar to Red Gate. Only there are no people, no cashiers, no controllers. Nobody here. Two escalators. Descending and ascending. Both stand. Holovanov pressed the button. The descender went. They descended into the underground halls. Pressed the button again. The escalator stopped. And together with Nastya - on marble. Footsteps echo far flying: boom-boom-boom-boom. Underground halls with corridors, passages and platforms are also similar in design to an ordinary metro station - to Dzerzhinskaya. Only

the name is not written anywhere. Everything is usual. There is one difference: the entrances to the tunnels through which the rails run are closed with steel walls, like locks on the Moscow-Volga canal. Can't break through those walls elements.

At the platform - a repair train. There are sweeping inscriptions on the locomotive and carriage: "Glavspetsremstroy-12". Do not understand whether the locomotive is diesel or electric. Probably both. Behind the locomotive is a green wagon. Not the luggage, not the mail: there are few windows. Or maybe not luggage or mail, but a wagon with equipment, a laboratory on wheels to check the condition of the railway track. You don't look in the windows. The windows are tightly closed with curtains from the inside. Behind this either a postal or a baggage car there is a platform with sleepers and another platform with some kind of mechanisms. The locomotive has

drivers. They nodded to Holovanov. Answered. At the mail car - a conductor. He also nodded. The conductor opened the door in front of Nastya and Kholovanov, closed it behind them, and immediately the train started off smoothly, as if they were just waiting for the two of them. The steel wall rumbled and clanged, letting the train through the tunnel, and just as easily and smoothly closed behind the train, clanging the locks once more, locking the station.

Inside the car is not a mail car at all. And not baggage. And it's not a laboratory on wheels. Along the wagon corridor there is a fluffy carpet of such whiteness, as if no one had ever walked along it, but flew over it. The walls and ceiling are mahogany. Everywhere you look, mirrors reflect one another. Bronze sparkles with sunshine. So all the metal parts are polished that it seems that the sparkle flows down with each stream. "This way," Holovanov opened the narrow

door. - Do not open the curtains during the day. At night, you can open it when there is no light in the compartment. The guide's name is Sei Seich.

Nice coupe. The main thing in any business is to observe harmony. White carpet with mahogany polished wood - harmony. Walnut wood table. On the table is a bronze lamp. Under a green lampshade. The feet are buried in the carpet, the curtains muffle the noise outside the window. Burgundy leather sofas. You sit down - you drown. It makes me want to kick off my shoes and onto that sofa in the corner. Feet under you in a ball.

The Firebird threw off her boots and went to the window in the corner. A ball of balls. Muzzle - under the curtain. Interesting. And behind the window

slipped through the most that neither is the usual subway station. The Firebird recognized her - "Dzerzhinskaya". On the platforms - night work. Two electricians are turning the chandelier with screwdrivers. Three fat women in gray robes are sweeping the platform, and the fourth is polishing the granite wall with a special machine. To sparkle the wall. So that the Soviet people would be proud of their underground palaces. So that adversaries, at one glance at our walls, granite envy of the muzzle crooked. So that they forever remain with crooked muzzles.

People are working. There is no time to look at the repair train. It would be something to look at. How many of them roam the underground tunnels at night. This one differed from others only in speed. He slipped, whistled, and the red light in the tunnel melted.

- It seems that we are the only ones on the whole train.
passengers. -

Correct impression. Was the train waiting for us alone? - Us alone.
What if there are no passengers? "Then it will leave without passengers." Another similar train is coming towards him now. One there, one back. Every night. In addition to passengers, these trains carry mail. There may be no passengers, but there is mail every day. Once a week, on Fridays, one such train runs to the 913th kilometer. Comes at twelve at night, leaves at twelve. In general, such trains travel throughout the Union. You, a special courier, will have to travel all these routes. - Where are we going now? - To the monastery. The conductor Sey Seich knocked on the door. - Tea? "Yeah," Holovanov shook his head. - What's for tea? - What is allowed? - This is Nastya out of pure curiosity. The conductor Sei Seich was deeply surprised by this question.
But service in a special wagon taught me not to be surprised at anything, and if I was surprised, then not to show surprise. That's why I answered

dignity: - Everything is possible.

- In general, so - Holovanov ordered. - I'll have tea later. Now for a drink and a bite. Details are up to you. Here is a business

conversation. Such a conversation is understandable and close to the special conductor. And Kirovskaya, Red Gates, Komsomolskaya are flying past the window. And it brought the repair train from the underground tunnel to the surface into an unimaginable intertwining of steel tracks, into a myriad of lights, into the echo of shunting engines, into the clatter of wheels at turnouts. If right after Komsomolskaya, it means that they were taken out somewhere at three stations. Ways, ways. Traffic lights - a whole constellation. On the tracks, fast trains are preparing for the journey: both passenger and postage.

Nearby, along a parallel path, the Moscow-Vladivostok Express is picking up speed. The paths diverge. Converge. Freight trains of endless stretch in multiple rows. They are loaded at night, unloaded. The oncoming one rumbled to Moscow. From Khabarovsk. It's clear - "Glavspetsremstroy" carried out on the way to the Yaroslavl railway station. Mytishchi, Pushkino, Zagorsk will go further. But rushing repair train somewhere to the side. Under a bridge, under another one, into a recess, onto an embankment, somewhere else. Pret confidently. Pushy. Leaving no one behind. Without delay. Finding in the darkness your only correct path in an innumerable multitude of paths. And everywhere in front of him the semaphores burn with blue fire. Everywhere his semaphores salute with a raised hand. The conductor knocked. The door is to the side. Tablecloth on the table. Kind of like a tablecloth.

Sey Seich does not work - he conjures. And immediately a decanter-scoundrel appeared on the table. Kept in the cold. Already an ice crust on the glass. To the bastard - sparkling charms. Immediately and plates with ice appeared. In the ice - very small jars with stellate sturgeon caviar fogged up. And with beluga caviar.

Oil pieces are carved in the form of sea shells. And lemon slices. Thin. And cucumbers. And tomatoes. And mushrooms. And some salad. And something else in jars. And pate on a saucer. And some smoked slices with green peas. Everything is in silver. Silver polished with love. And the charms are gold. It's time to fill them up. And Sey Seich put on the table a chased jug with a long thin neck, with a single, but beautiful flower, wished for appetite and went out, closing the door.

- Come on, Firebird, for the remembrance of Katkina's soul. I know you don't drink, but it follows. And outside the window - holiday villages fly by in the dark. Platforms. Stations. A repair train flies - no courier can keep up.

5

Nastya opened her eyes because it was unusual. Unusual, because we are standing. It's always like this: the train is coming - all the passengers are fast asleep. Stopped - everyone woke up. So Nastya woke up, looked around, was surprised. Where is she?

It turned out: in the corner of a wide soft leather sofa. Kalachik. She fell asleep without undressing. Only someone put a pillow under her head and covered it with a woolen blanket. The table has been removed. Holovanov is not. She peeked out the window through the curtain. Pine forest. Barbed wire. People in uniform. Dogs. Light. Six o'clock in the morning.

The senior guard shouted something to the driver. And the train moved slowly. Two guards with rifles brought the doors of the lattice gate behind them. And the train started picking up speed. And again on the sides - cottages behind green fences, birch groves, a river in reed banks and a huge white stone monastery with towers, with green roofs. The brakes screeched. We've arrived. Nastya looked out into the corridor. From the neighboring

compartment, Holovanov smiles: - Did you get enough sleep? Time to get to work,

Comrade Princess. You travel across the Russian North
- in every village there is a church. Broken, plundered, abandoned, but all the same beautiful. You go through birch groves, you go through fields, and suddenly - a monastery wall. Like a small Kremlin. Powerful cathedral in the middle. The walls around, on the breaks of the walls of the tower with hipped roofs. The loopholes are narrow, the stone is echoing, the walls are three meters thick. Forged gates. This is exactly where they landed. A lake like the sea, oak groves. On the shore is a white-stone monastery. Lonely station under the wall. Repair train at the platform. And not a soul around.

In the indestructible wall, built of multi-ton granite boulders, there is a vaulted niche and a heavy door. At the door is a sentry. Not

just watch, but exemplary. Exactly the same as on the Order of the Red Star. He tapped the butt of the sentry on the granite path, greeting Holovanov and Nastya, and the door in the wall opened. Nastya

thought that they would check the documents for two hours. But, apparently, Holovanov is everywhere entrance without checking documents.

6

Nastya stepped on the stone slabs of the courtyard and realized: this is not just a monastery, this is a convent. Or rather, girlish. Only the girls are not in black clothes, but in tight short skirts, in leather jackets, like commissars of the Civil War. With pistols. Lots of girls.

They laugh. They look at Holovanov. Our most common Soviet Komsomol girls. And the views are the most ordinary, open Soviet views. A man is a woman's friend, comrade and brother. And a woman to a man is a comrade, friend and sister. So the Komsomol girls smile at

Kholovanov with friendly smiles. And the Komsomol members look at Kholovanov with comradely glances. Maybe the looks are a little longer than friendly ones. Just a little longer. So it is not even noticeable that they are longer.

There is also a uniform in the monastery: green overalls, high boots with thick soles, a parachute helmet. Past Nastya and Holovanov, panting, the platoon rustles with their soles. The girls don't smile here. Sweat streams, breath on the stall. All night long, a hefty aunt, who looked like a basketball captain, drove them through the surrounding forests: pull yourself up! So no smiles. It was only the captain's wife who gave Holovanov a long, comradely look.

And another platoon is returning from night activities: four squads of ten each and a ferocious wench at the head. This one is small. But it should be noted that among the small ones, too, sometimes ferocious ones are also found. Shouts. She caught up with Holovanov, brightened her face. Her platoon ran past, and again a roar: pull yourself up!

On the lawn in front of the central bell tower, the third platoon is cleaning their weapons. Fourth - parachutes stacks. -

Where are you jumping?

- Here we have a polar aviation airfield nearby. Here and the "Stalin route" is the main place. Sometimes jump to the Crimea

we fly.

Komsomol members in leather jackets meet in flocks. Serious people will pass by, and then behind their backs: ha ha ha.

7

Stalin put the last sheet aside and thought. There was no dominant rumor last week. They chatted about this and that. They talked about the fact that the prices for meat, butter, bread, apples, vodka were reduced. People rejoice. They also talked about the disappearance of meat, butter, bread and apples at once. Only vodka remained. Cheaper by ten percent, and the quality is worse - by a hundred. And Moscow is

talking about Robespierre. This is not a rumor, but a popular topic. Robespierre was the leader of the French Revolution, then thundered under the sparkling blade of the guillotine. They chopped off their own head for him ... Like a head of cabbage. And his head rolled ... The

most interesting thing: when Robespierre was taken on a dirty wagon to the place of execution on the Place de la Concorde, the crowd screamed curses, threw stones at him, rotten apples and rotten eggs, the same crowd that three days ago considered him a genius of all times and peoples, a crowd that, with the greatest enthusiasm, accepted a new cult - the cult of the Supreme Being, the cult of Robespierre, the cult of personality. And a lot in the summary of all sorts of details about the Supreme Being. Not a summary of Moscow rumors, but a historical treatise. Signed under the summary:

Malenkov. Comrade Stalin knows the history of the Supreme Being. Interested. Next to the reports on the Stalinist table is an old book - Gustav le Bon. "Psychology of the crowd"[2]. The behavior of the crowd is incomprehensible. Terrible, unpredictable element. The crowd always has leaders and instigators. Why did the crowd suddenly start talking about Robespierre?

And one more round of rumors for the week. About this, about this. Popular topic of the week: Robespierre. Signed under the summary with a hare's tail. Illegible.

And here is a summary from Holovanov: price cuts and Robespierre. The signature is sharp, energetic, the letters are like breaks in lightning. And what does Comrade

Yezhov report? Comrade Yezhov reports on prices. Office of Comrade Yezhov For some reason, the popular topic about Robespierre was not recorded.

Chapter 9

1

A house must be built so that it stands for a thousand years. Minimum. Therefore, the best building material is granite. Nastya is walking behind Holovanov, the granite steps are higher, higher, higher. For five hundred years people have been walking on these steps, but they have only worn them out a little. You can walk on these steps for another ten

thousand years. Granite walls dampen any sound, in these walls there is always coolness, darkness and peace. To the right - the corridors are booming, to the left - the corridors are booming. Higher and higher Nastya rises after Holovanov. Without training, you can suffocate, but Nastya the dancer is trained, shortness of breath does not torment, her breath does not break, like those girls who ran only one night and are already breathing heavily.

They came. Under the roof. To the attic. The roof was made of blackened oak trunks, petrified for five hundred years. In the attic - a corridor and doors to the right

and left. Holovanov opened the door: you are welcome. Nastya entered, suffocated with happiness. Room under a sloping roof, three by three. A wide wooden bed without backs under a bearskin, a shelf, a wardrobe. The floor is made of oak beams. Another skin on the floor. Cast iron stove in the corner. By the window is a table. Also oak. Chair. All. And nothing else. She dreamed of such a home.

Such rooms are found only in knight's castles and fairy-tale houses. Such rooms in children's books are drawn when a large color picture is full page.

2

The monastery courtyard is wide, all in lilac. Between the rampage of lilac - huge buildings of boulders: temples, bell towers, refectories, cells. Between the buildings through the lilac - paths, alleys,

lawns. And everything is covered by an indestructible wall with towers. And behind the wall - a thousand-year-old spruce forest and lakes sparkle in the reeds, and again forest and lakes. And again the forest to the very mountains, to the distant horizon and beyond. Nastya figured out what beauty will open when autumn hits, when

it decorates the district in crimson. If you climb the highest bell tower, then from above with binoculars you can see the airfield behind the forest. There, on the airfield, there are bright orange planes. polar aviation. And one burns with silver. This is the "Stalin route". It is easy to recognize him by outlines

and by sparkling. The worker-peasant government fell in love with the monasteries. Why is the monastery good? The one that is closed. The fact that the walls are made of granite boulders. There, higher up, the pebbles are smaller, half a ton each. And at the bottom of the bases are huge stones. And the monastery is good because it has everything necessary for life. For a solitary life. And the good thing is that the doors are iron, that the gratings are forged, that the locks are intricate, that the cellars are deep. The monastery is good for a concentration camp. And under the secret research center. And in general for

any secret enterprise is irreplaceable. - So, Nastenka, this place is called simply: the monastery. There are many monasteries in the possessions of the NKVD: Donskoy, Ostashkovsky, Solovetsky. But we also have a monastery. There is no need for outsiders to explain what a monastery is. And your people will understand you perfectly. This place also has an official name, but it is strictly secret: the Institute of the World Revolution. Almost everyone is banned from entering. First of all - to the Chekists. Comrade Stalin personally deals with the strategy of the world revolution. He is a frequent visitor to us. Arrives in the evening, works at night, and in the morning again in Moscow. Sleep on the way. No one will pay attention to his absence. Materials about everything in the world flock to us here. The work of the special couriers of the Central Committee is not the delivery of materials, but their processing. Our institute is both an educational institution and a research center. The institute is divided into departments, sectors and platoons. You are enrolled in the ninth platoon, but this is for purely administrative reasons. Preparation will be individual and work – individual. Your preparation: Spanish, running, shooting, swimming, sambo,

an idea of stickies and bear cubs, let's do mountain training ... - And here the mountains are

gentle. - In the summer I

will take you to the Caucasus, but now you will master the main bell tower.

This is your study, and you will work in sound control. The workplace is in a large hall. Let's start with the main one. From this device. Previously, such devices weighed a lot and took up a lot of space. Now science has contrived and made the apparatus very light, only 530 kilograms. Its name is a tape recorder. Created by the creative genius of the Soviet people. Nastya is surprised: all the inscriptions on metal are in enemy letters,

and a sign on the side: "Made in USA".

"This is by mistake," Holovanov explains. - Our guys made the device, but they wrote everything in English terms. Need to take it off. And the label was added by mistake. I repeat: the apparatus was created by the creative genius of the Soviet people. So it is necessary to write: "Made in the USSR." Or don't write anything. And so it is clear that only we can build such machines. This miracle device can record human speech and then play it back. But the speech is recorded not on a gramophone record familiar to us, but on a steel wire. The wire can then be demagnetized, and the speech of another person can be recorded on the same coil, then demagnetized again. Why write down the speech? - To listen to then as many times as you want. In Moscow, we already have several such devices. Basically, where the

restricted areas and dachas of the top leadership of the party, government, NKVD, army. During the construction of government dachas, an underground cable is preliminarily connected to each. All cables converge to recording centers. Every day coils of wire are collected from all over Moscow to the Kremlin and delivered by train to our monastery for analysis. We listen and find out who is a real Marxist and who is not very... - How interesting. - You get up every day at noon, that is, at twelve in the afternoon. Two hours of physical training. Time for lunch. Lunch in the dining hall of the ninth platoon. Hour of personal time. Four hours - learning the intricacies of our business.

From four to four in the morning - work in

sound analysis. From four in the morning to eight - training. And then go to sleep. From eight to twelve. When you are in a monastery, work is strictly regulated. And on departures the working day is not limited. One day off per month. One vacation per year is a week. It is advisable to spend your holidays here. You don't have any relatives. We select these here. Sometimes the schedule will change, but we never get more than four hours of sleep. You can sleep on weekends and during holidays. None of us have time for personal life, so we deal with personal life in the workplace.

“Dragon, I think I understand everything. But if we do everything this work, then what does the NKVD do?

- The NKVD controls the whole country and much beyond its borders. And we control the NKVD. And one more thing: there are two types of conspiracies. The first type is when there is a bad person, he needs to be shot a little, but there is no evidence. That's when a conspiracy is hung around his neck like a dead dog. Everyone knows how to invent such conspiracies. Such conspiracies are considered gold. But fake. The NKVD has permission and orders to fabricate such conspiracies. We do not have such a right, we do not produce counterfeit gold. We are looking for real conspiracies. And above all - in the NKVD itself. There are conspiracies, but we don't know where they are. To find a conspiracy, according to our concepts, is to find a nugget. I am not setting you any task, I am not ordering you to look for a conspiracy in any particular institution, in any particular troupe of people. If I knew where the conspiracy was, I would have opened it myself. Therefore, we work here as gold prospectors in the Klondike: we do not specify who should look for gold where. If they had known, they would have dug there themselves. Each of us chooses a stream for himself. Below is a library with the most secret documents of Soviet institutions and a library with personal files for tens of thousands of people. Choose any field for your activity. Work on any site, only to find gold one day. Look for conspiracies and find. As a last resort, find new tricks and ways to control the top leadership of the country.

To perfectly learn how to operate a machine called a tape recorder, many years are needed. There are more buttons on the tape recorder, levers and toggle switches than in the cockpit of a bomber. You can master all this only with special engineering training. There is no way to distract the girls to study all the tricks. Therefore, they are given only the initial course of controlling a tape recorder and are strictly ordered: do not touch these buttons, do not turn these knobs. The hardest part is

setting up the tape recorder. She was entrusted to a special engineer. Russia is the birthplace of the tape recorder. Tape recorders were created by the creative genius of the Soviet people, but an American engineer, Mr. Humphrey, was assigned to set them up and maintain them. Good man. Prominent such of himself. He knows his business. His work is hard: a capricious tape recorder. And there are so many of them in the monastery: tune each one, check each one, repair each one. Mr. Humphrey quickly mastered the Soviet technique. Maybe, especially for him, all the inscriptions on tape recorders are written in English?

Technological progress is going on at absolutely incredible leaps, but Mr. Humphrey is mastering the latest technology. Will sit another day, and deal with the new system. Previously, tape recorders were only stationary: a frame made of rails was welded inside a large room and water-cooled lamps were hung on the frame, a bicycle-type device was installed - you sit, you pedal, a drum with magnetic wire spins from the pedals. Now other times. Now the electric motor

turns the coil with the magnetic wire. Tape recorders have now learned to make miniature, like a piano on wheels. I wanted to - keep it in one room, tired - roll it into another. A tape recorder rolled into any cell, here's a sound control post for you.

Day and night, Mr. Humphrey with a soldering iron around the monastery conjures over tape recorders. True, Holovanov does not skimp, he counts out tight bundles of dollars to Mr. Humphrey. And the American house in the monastery was built especially for Mr. Humphrey. They bring him newspapers and magazines from America. The cook, Aunt Masha, fries scrambled eggs for Mr. Humphrey in a special American way. And he is not forbidden to listen to American radio. Antennas

over the monastery there are: those who are allowed can listen even to the whole world. And

yet you do not envy Mr. Humphrey, just as you do not envy those few men whom the villainous fate throws into the nunnery. A woman by nature is a picky eater. A woman is more capricious than a tape recorder. Therefore, neither day nor night, Mr. Humphrey has no rest. All calls: - Could Mr. Humphrey at 515? Nastya is surprised: Mr.

Humphrey cannot live forever in a monastery. The time will come for him to return to America. So after all, he will tell there, in America, about the details of the construction of Soviet tape recorders ...

4

Once upon a time, Comrade Lenin was sitting in a hut. Sitting and dreaming. It was clear to Comrade Lenin that any revolution must exterminate its enemies. And in any case, the revolution always has more enemies than friends. What classes and social groups need to be exterminated is clear to everyone. But a brilliant idea lit up Lenin's head: the enemy can be among the best friends. Who killed Caesar? To whom did Caesar shout: "Tu quoque, Brute?" Brutus shouted, favorite. And who sent Robespierre to the guillotine? Those who raised him to the rank of the Supreme Being. And who pushed Bonaparte out of power? Marshals whom Bonaparte brought out of the dregs and straight to riches. And who betrayed Emelka Pugachev? They issued theirs. Are there many more examples? The whole story is worth it.

Conclusion? The conclusion is simple. It's better to look after your friends. The closer friends are to the pinnacle of power, the more dangerous they are, the more temptation they have to seize power, the more opportunities they have to do so. But Lenin had friends whom it was better to immediately put up against the wall than to wait until they were taken by the throat at the most inopportune moment. I should have had a list of them beforehand. Without

hesitation, Comrade Lenin pulled out a piece of paper from a notebook, squinted, looked into the distance and went to scribble names. He quickly scribbled a piece of paper, was surprised and pulled out a second one. Quickly wrote the second and then

I decided that you can't get enough of the leaves. Comrade Lenin took a large blue notebook, opened it and went to write from the beginning. Long wrote. Wrote the notebook to the end. Tired.

Lenin's work was not in vain. After the Communist comrades seized power, they set up special emergency organs to fight the counter-revolution, and those organs went to exterminate hostile parties, social groups and entire classes. But Comrade Lenin did not forget about the notebook. They destroyed enemies in classes and groups, and friends were

not forgotten. Only trouble: the revolution has many enemies, but there are also many friends who it would be nice to destroy. They did not fit in one notebook at all. Comrade Lenin called Comrade Stalin and ordered the work to continue. Comrade Stalin took up work, but soon he realized that it was so easy to make lists of all friends who

could turn into enemies in a couple of months. And Comrade Stalin put a responsible comrade, his personal secretary, Grigory Kanner, to this work, gave him assistants, allocated a room and said: always do this. Someone might think: they instructed Stalin, and he took it and shifted it to another. No no. Let's be fair to Comrade Stalin: Comrade Stalin did not forget this matter, but took it under his personal

control. Grisha Kanner writes the lists, and Comrade Stalin checks, corrects, and approves them. Enemies are exterminated by the Cheka at an accelerated pace, and Grisha Kanner writes lists of friends who should not be forgotten either. We quickly found the first gradation: friends are internal, Soviet, and external, foreign. And therefore, a department had to be created to account for them. I had to divide the lists into two categories. If so, then the department of registration of

friends was divided into two sectors: external and internal. But both external and internal friends were divided into many classes, types and varieties. And therefore the accounting department was turned into a management with departments and sectors.

Comrade Stalin not only supervised the compilation of lists, but also recommended the introduction of systematization in alphabetical order, according to the degree of harmfulness of friends, according to categories of activity. And Comrade Stalin also recommended not to stretch the lists, but at any opportunity

shorten. Do not wait for the world revolution, and now friends who may turn out to be enemies, shoot a little. Unintentionally. On the hunt. And cut them. On the operating table. To get up no more. Or he recommended this or that friend while bathing to pull a little by the legs. Or on a quiet morning, at dawn, slightly turn over the boat with a lonely fisherman. And so that the ends are in the water. To perform such tricks, the OMD was created - the department of wet affairs. Some friends

are better not to drown, but to push under the car going. Or under a train. And Comrade Stalin recommends not just writing lists, but starting a daddy for each friend. By 1923, the organization had grown, and it was necessary to come up with a harmonious name for it. You can, of course, call it this: Directorate for Combating Friends of the World Revolution. Doesn't sound. Need to be softer. Why management? Why not an institute? Institute of World Revolution. Briefly and clearly.

5

And there was another episode in the life of the leaders. In the Kremlin, Comrade Lenin was talking on the phone and suddenly realized that the telephone lady who connected him with Comrade Trotsky could (if she wanted to) learn all the secrets of the world revolution. Comrade Lenin hung up the phone, called the Politburo the next day and demanded vigilance. From now on, you can't tell secrets over the phone. Everyone agreed. Basically. Only now ... The only thing is that everyone is so used to the phone that it is impossible to imagine life without it. The comrades consulted and decided not to give up the telephone, but to create for the most responsible comrades such a telephone communication system that no one could eavesdrop on. So that the lines would not be connected by young ladies, but so that they themselves would be connected. Automatically.

To whom is this task entrusted? All the comrades in the Politburo and the Central Committee are busy delivering fiery speeches, writing clever books, publishing incendiary articles. The more fiery speeches a revolutionary makes, the more clever books he writes, the more incendiary articles he publishes, the more support he has among the masses. The more support among the masses, the greater the influence of this revolutionary on the course of the Russian and world revolution.

Only Comrade Stalin did not make fiery speeches. Yes, he couldn't. Only Comrade Stalin did not write wise books. Yes, and did not take. Only Comrade Stalin did not publish incendiary articles. Yes, and did not seek. And therefore, Comrade Stalin was not known among the masses. It turned out that it wouldn't. Comrade Stalin had no levers of influence on the masses. He does not care about creating such leverage. So, if he still has nothing to do, let him do it.

purely technical matters.

It didn't take a lot of mind to do that. The gold of the Russian Empire has been captured, take as much as you need for such a thing. Abroad, there may be communists among telephone designers - secretly bring such a comrade to the Land of Soviets. Foreign capitalist technology will soon perish completely, but before its complete decay and collapse, it still sometimes gives out amazing things, like automatic telephone exchanges that connect two telephone sets without the help of a telephone lady. So buy such a thing from decaying capitalists. Comrade Stalin has nothing to worry about: take gold, invite a foreign communist engineer, purchase the best automatic telephone exchange on his recommendation, deliver it to Moscow, put telephones in the offices of responsible comrades, debug communications and check. Then the foreign communist is added to the list of enemies and shot, so that he does not reveal the secrets of the Kremlin communications center.

Comrade Stalin took up questions of government communications, and he got carried away. He ordered the most modern equipment abroad, secretly summoned a good telephone engineer who believed in the world revolution to the Land of Soviets. The engineer put telephones for the most important leaders so that it was impossible to eavesdrop. I debugged the entire connection, I received a lot of money for the work.

And disappeared. In the name of world revolution. (And the money was returned to

the cashier.) Responsible comrades praised Stalin. Stalin is not capable of anything, so at least he fit into it. Now talk on the phone as much as you like, no one will overhear, no telephone lady.

The big leaders did not take into account one point: Comrade Stalin not only fulfilled an assignment of particular importance, but also took the initiative:

he placed the central automatic switchboard in a place where no enemy could penetrate - in the Central Committee of the Communist Party, in a room next to his office.

Not just Comrade Stalin fulfilled the order and forgot about it. Not at all. Comrade Stalin took the security of telephone communications under his personal and constant control. An overseas engineer, on the orders of Stalin, installed such a telephone exchange, which not only ensured reliable uninterrupted communication between any two telephone sets, but also made it possible to check from the central post whether someone had connected to the lines, and whether the connection was working well. So if, for example, Comrade Trotsky is talking on the phone with Comrade Bukharin, then no one can connect to their line at all. Nobody can overhear them. With the exception of Comrade Stalin. Comrade Stalin joined

in the conversations of Comrade

Trotsky, and Comrade Rykov, and Comrade Bukharin, and Comrade Zinoviev and Kamenev.

Comrade Stalin is caring: he will join in, he does not interfere in the conversations of the leaders, he only checks whether he can hear well. It sounded good. No wonder the overseas engineer was paid a lot of money.

Responsible comrades discussed questions of the world revolution and all sorts of other questions. In the meantime, Comrade Stalin proposed expanding the communication system: not only to provide Moscow leaders with communications that no enemy can eavesdrop on, but also to supply miracle telephones to the leaders of the Ukraine, the Urals, the Volga region, and the Caucasus. So they did.

At first,

Comrade Stalin himself connected to the communication lines, clicked his tongue, shook his head: how good it is to hear, how far technology has reached! Then he ordered the creation of a department for constant quality control of the work of government communications. And include it in the Institute of World Revolution. The point is the same: to study friends who may turn out to be enemies. But not

everyone talks on the phone. They speak without a telephone: at the dacha, in a sanatorium, in a forest hunting house, in a Caucasian resort, in a government train car, in a ward of the Kremlin hospital, in a bathhouse, in a steam room, in the kitchen, in bed. And all this must be heard. And all this

must be kept under control. To protect the World Revolution from friends who might become enemies. Then the

question is: who should be put in control of the quality of the passage of sound signals? Comrades from the NKVD? It is forbidden. You need to listen to them yourself. Army commanders? And these cannot. They will listen to secrets and use knowledge to seize power.

It was necessary to put such people who will not take advantage. Which by themselves do not represent forces. Young girls. Best of all - no relatives, no acquaintances, no friends. Best of all - with spoiled biographies. So that in case...

Girls and for protection to use not bad. There are situations when it is advantageous to roll out the five-turreted T-35 tanks of the Fifth Heavy Tank Brigade onto the streets of Moscow and release regiments of the First Moscow Proletarian Rifle Division into the open spaces of Moscow squares. But there are situations when it is better to let groups of laughing girls into the streets of Moscow. Whose hands are accustomed to killing. This is also a force, but invisible.

6

From the point of view of the interests of the world revolution, people are divided into two main categories: those who need to be cut, and those who

are not yet needed. Soon a world revolution will break out, and it is necessary to know who is who. So that everyone does not cling to the victorious proletariat. The hour will strike, the alarm will sound, and you need to remember whether you were with us, comrade, or against us. Did you evade? Did you hesitate? Did he show conciliation? Who is not with us is against us! There will be a world revolution worse than a terrible judgment. And for every fr
ready.

The principle is old: cockerels to cockerels, cancer necks to the side! Ladies and gentlemen, madam, mademoiselle, monsieurs, ladies and gentlemen, gentlemen, dear comrades, dear friends, sort out the suits!

The day is coming, and the comrades from the NKVD will have a lot of work to do. There will be a lot of shooting. Comrades from the NKVD will exterminate the enemies. But who will exterminate friends who can become enemies? There is such power! The Institute of World Revolution does not sleep. Never sleeps. Endless shelves and daddies on the shelves - that's the weapon of defense of the revolution! Materials for all countries. On all continents. By capitalists. Landowners. Social Democrats. By liberals and socialists. On the left radicals and right moderates. For generals and officers. According to journalists: I wrote a vile article about the Soviet Union, about the NKVD, about Comrade Stalin - that's all, and daddy appeared on you. Thin. One leaflet in daddy is your article. You write another one, slanderous, - your daddy will become thicker by exactly one newspaper sheet. You can then write a hundred laudatory articles. The good ones don't count. The good ones won't add or take anything away from you. There is no need to say bad things. Like this. You sit somewhere in your Paris, scribbling paper with a pen.

And you don't

know. Oh you don't know...

7

– Your work today is in a group of flowers. Forget everything in the world. Remember: the main thing for you is flowers. You are not alone in the flowers, but try to imagine that you alone are responsible for all the flowers in all of Moscow.
- Clear.

The crowd surges. My reader, if there is a choice - to control the Moscow crowd or calm the herd of rabid stallions, my advice is better to choose the herd. It is both simpler and quieter. And Nastya has no choice. Combat mission: crowd control, namely, work in a group of flowers. Nastya makes her way through the crowd, like the Ermak icebreaker through the polar ice. Oh, it wouldn't be covered with hummocks. Look to the right. Look to the left. With a keen eye Nastya sees thin chains of security officers in

the crowd. From west to east. From North to South. If the eye is not trained, then the chains do not fix. It just doesn't catch them. In the crowd does not distinguish. And the chains form boxes. Soon an inaudible command will pass through the chains:

block. And there will be no way out of the crowd invisible boxes. Only their people in the crowd slide, passing freely through the lines of the Chekists as if through a wall. And Kholovanov pushed through nearby, and his guys. Here they

pressed some uncle: what is it with you, uncle, sticking out? And one more. Kindly so. And imperceptibly. They pressed it on three sides and felt it from the tie to the soles. You won't pay attention. We crushed, patted on the sides and hello: continue, uncle, enjoy the view. And Nastya breaks through the crowd like a sailor Zheleznyak from an enemy encirclement. And the entire ninth platoon, turning around in a chain, pushes its way through the crowd. And another platoon, and another. For an outsider, these are not platoons at all, but simply Komsomol girls in cotton dresses. If there is a suspicion of a weapon, then none of the group of flowers intervenes: Kholovanov blink. He'll figure it out. And girls - look for flowers.

Here is Nastya - the same task. And he looks out like an eagle soaring a snake in the rocks. Seems clean here. It seems that everything is fine here. You can't see the whole crowd. Hundreds of people to the right and to the left are doing the same work. Flowers look out. Look to

the right. Look to the left. Here it is! Healthy girl with friends. They covered the girl's girlfriend, and she, the dog, holds the bouquet. The bouquet is lowered to the ground, so that it is imperceptible. He hopes to throw a bouquet to

Comrade Stalin. Don't worry, snake! Elbows Nastya rows like oars. She made her way: - Give

it back, you bastard, a bouquet. I'll shoot. What can be in flowers? Right. Flowers may contain pomegranates. They will throw a bouquet to Comrade Stalin, and the bouquet will explode together with Comrade Stalin. What else can be in the bouquet? Right. Flowers may contain drops of chemical warfare agents. Like chemical warfare. They will throw such a bouquet to Comrade Stalin, he will inhale the aroma, and that's it.

The crowd knows that it is impossible to bring flowers, but some irresponsible ones strive. This work is actually done by the NKVD. But who can vouch for the reliability of the NKVD? The NKVD needs to be insured. Whip up. And here is the evidence of careless work: Nastya collected a whole armful of bouquets. The question is, where is Comrade Yezhov looking? What does the NKVD do?

Nastya squeezed her way with bouquets to the very stall "Beer - water". A beautiful stall. It's expensive to see. Just no beer. From the inside, the window of the stall is closed with plywood shields, so that it was clear: there is no beer. And there is no cooling water. But Nastya doesn't need beer. And people don't need beer. So that people do not sleep. The stall is for a completely different need. Nastya knocked with a conditional knock, the door opened. Inside, behind curtains, a chemist sits in a gas mask. He examined the bouquets: are there any oily drops? There are no such drops. And we will take chemical samples. He broke the indicator tubes, pumped the air: the indicator tubes do not show anything.

So, there are no toxic substances in the flowers. So, maybe a grenade is hidden in them? We dismantled each bouquet by stalk: pomegranates are not hidden in flowers. But enemies can also insert a weight into the bouquet: they will throw such a bouquet at Comrade Stalin, even if there is not a grenade in the bouquet, but just a weight, but you can also poke it with a weight if you wish.

In a word, there were no weights in the bouquets. Checked everything - and in the body. There is a car behind the stall. Here they throw flowers at her. Complete car.

These flowers can now be taken to the special stage, where thousands of enemies are buried. And dump it in there. Like, eternal memory to you, comrade enemies. And Comrade Stalin should be presented with completely different flowers. Those that are specially grown in the greenhouses of the Kremlin's flower farm under special protection for this occasion. And not everyone who wants to bring flowers to Comrade Stalin should, but especially selected people for such a case.

Chapter 10

1

Nastya opened "Komsomolskaya Pravda", and there on the whole page - Stalin and she with a bouquet. "On behalf of the Soviet youth... Noble parachutist Anastasia Streletskaia... Beloved Stalin..." Rumors in Moscow:

the girl is really alive and well, her muzzle was printed on the whole page. Such a pretty one. Big-eyed. With flowers. The Soviet youth gathered flowers, and for her, that means ... and she, on behalf of and on behalf of ... from all Soviet youth. Directly to Comrade Stalin a bouquet. And they talked that it crashed. It's all from Trotsky. The nature of such a false one has begotten. Lay down on the Stalinist table operational reports on Moscow

rumors over the past week. Signed by Comrade Malenkov. Signed by Comrade Yezhov. Signed by Holovanov. Still behind someone's illegible signature. Independent sources report that a new insulting expression, not encountered before, has been registered: "You are lying like Trotsky."

2

Our prison is special. We have the best teachers here. From here they will never come out. Those who do not want to teach, we shoot. Little by little, reluctantly, they pass on their knowledge and skills to us. In this cell I have four of the best professionals: a pickpocket, a burglar, a bear cub and a sticky. - Lipach? - Lipach. This is the one

who draws fake cash and fake money. - And I thought that the Soviet government of all those who are fake money draws, straight to the wall.

- This is right. The workers' and peasants' government loves the Lipach no more than the Trotskyites. In principle, the Trotskyist is the same sticky guy, only on the political front. The Soviet government presses the sticky people mercilessly. Except the very best. The very best will still serve the cause of control and world revolution. The world revolution will not be victorious without stickies and bugbears. - And who are the bear cubs? - These are the ones who work with bears. - Trainers? - No. They work with other bears. The bear is the safe.

Look at that painted one. This is Sevastyan Ivanovich. Bear cub. Nastya looked into the hole: four were sitting on the floor, their legs crossed in Turkish, they were cutting cards. The urks feel in their guts that someone is now looking at them through a hole, they smile friendly and brazenly. One hand invites: hey, who's there, come in, let's throw cards. "What, are they allowed to play cards in prison?" "You see, Firebird, our prison is special. With favors. They are our teachers. They will teach you too - both pocket business and housing. For control, these are the necessary crafts. As for the cards... It's impossible to take them away. Tried.

Everything can be done by Holovanov. Any aircraft can fly. with anyone parachute jump. Shoot from any weapon. And then suddenly ... - Go into the cell and take it away. - We go in, but there are no cards. We search the camera. We search them. We strip naked, shake everything up. There are no cards. The cell is empty, nowhere to hide. But there are no cards. We leave. As soon as the bolt in the door clanks, the lock has not yet been closed, and they again sit and play.

Nastya looked at the camera again. Empty monastery cell. The floor is stone. The walls are indestructible. There are bars on the window - the bars are thicker than Holovanov's hands. And that's it. And four on the floor. They turned their oily muzzles at the door. Such cute hari. Cunning.

"Dragon, I figured out how to improve control.

- Report. We

have a whole monastery of girls. And everyone's faces are a feast for the eyes. And what if, after completing a course in our monastery, after three or four years of work, send them to the provinces and push them to work with responsible comrades: secretaries, telephone operators, typists, librarians, nurses in the most important government sanatoriums and hospitals, conductors in government trains and wagons. The secrets of our girls will not be given out: they have learned the laws of the monastery. But next to each big boss there will be several of our girls. Yes, so send them so that they are from different issues, so that they do not know each other and supply information about big bosses independently of each other, and even about each other. What is it?

- You are smart. Firebird, but do you really think that Comrade Stalin, without you, did not think of this before and did not introduce such a system? Introduced, back in 1919.

4

Sevastyan the bear cub is painted with blue pictures. And on the cheeks, and on the neck, and on the ears, the pictures are enticing and the inscriptions are romantic. And behind the ears. And on the palms. And at your fingertips. AND under the

nails. - Hello, Sevastyan Ivanovich. -

Hello, if you're not kidding. -

Kholovanov said that you would teach me the craft. - What is there to learn? You take a bear ... The

basement is huge. Bolsheviks brought safes here from all over Russia. All types. Holovanov's keys. Holovanov locked the safes. And Sevastyan the bear cub has only delays in his hands. Sevastyan - unlock. - You take a bear, for example, this one. Firm

A. Webble & Co, West

Bromwich. British. What do we do next? We get wires.

Sevastyan screwed up his eyes at the light, bent the wire, and into the hole. And one more. And further. Twisted with wires. Safe - click. Sevastyan turned the handle, the safe opened.

- And this is German, Krupp. What are we doing with it? We open it. Why would he stay closed? And this is our native, Putilovsky. Healthy. Oh, healthy. And we his - tryk, and you're done.

Sevastyan spends five minutes on some safes, ten on others. The little green one spun for twenty minutes. And then it was easy for him again. Some open in a minute. Sevastyan is walking through the basement, only the locks are clicking. He knows them all for a long time. And everyone has already opened a hundred times. They may have already bothered him, like an old school teacher who knows the answers to all problems for a long, long time. "Now try it

yourself." The rest of the night Nastya opened the safe. She scratched her fingers, bent all the wires this way and that. And Sevastyan is sitting next to him, chuckling.

5

Nastya has been sleeping since eight in the morning. But how do you sleep? Sebastian scoffs. Doesn't want to teach. He doesn't want to, and that's it: here it is necessary this way and that. But as? And to Kholovanov: whom, they say, are you sending me to study? mediocrity. You show her, but she does not understand anything. But everyone knows that there are no bad students and cannot be. There are only bad teachers. And if the student does not understand the teacher, it means

that the teacher has not developed his abilities so that everyone understands him. And there is nothing more insulting and humiliating than to stand at Putilov's safe for eight hours, jabbing wires and carnations into the keyhole. Nastya is hurt to tears. This expression is: "to tears." It's a shame to Nastya, but she won't show him tears. He will not bring her to tears. You can't make Nastya cry into a pillow. She just grinds her teeth. It is easy to run for eight hours, but to stand at the safe

for eight hours, scratching it in impotent fury, is torture. Holovanov chuckles. Once Holovanov showed Nastya his weakness: he does not know how to find cards from Sevastyan, now Holovanov wants Nastya to feel her weakness.

6

"Sit down, comrade Kholovanov. Report. - A new idea, Comrade Stalin. - New idea?

"Exactly so,

Comrade Stalin. New idea. What is this new idea?

- One of the large hotels in the

center of Moscow, preferably not far from the Kremlin, must be given in full to serve the top leadership of the Soviet Union. Foreigners are not allowed in.

"That has already been done, comrade Kholovanov. The Moskva Hotel serves only to

serve the highest leadership of the Soviet Union, and foreigners are not allowed into it.

- Prohibit security officers from eavesdropping on telephone conversations in this hotel. -

Forbidden. -

Subordinate the hotel to the commandant's office of the Kremlin. And so that not one the Chekist did not dare ...

- The hotel is subordinate to the commandant's office of the Kremlin, and not a single Chekist dare.

- All rooms should be equipped with listening devices, everything heard should be reported not to the NKVD, but to you personally.

- They report to me personally.

- Strengthen the lighting of the hotel at night so that Muscovites and guests of the capital could admire the hotel day and night. - It's well lit. People go at night, admire. - Light up even more. In addition, to

modernize the hotel. Install a new ventilation system. Thick heavy curtains in all rooms should be replaced with light ones, and not all

the window was curtained, but only the lower part.

- That's an idea, comrade Holovanov. Into your head sometimes brilliant ideas come. Holovanov

lowered his eyes. He loved it when Stalin praised, but he decided once and for all for himself: do not deceive Stalin. Just because you can't fool him. Because the truth will still come out. Therefore, Holovanov told Stalin the truth. Rarely received praise. But he managed to keep his head.

Everyone who lied to Stalin, even in small things, did not live long. Therefore, Holovanov, looking down at his feet, admitted: "This is not my idea, Comrade Stalin. - Whose is it? - We have one girl working in control. You know her. Parachutist. - Shooter? - She. - Where is she? She is in your waiting room now. I took it just in case. - Call.

7

Nastya is sitting in the waiting room. Stalin's personal secretary Comrade. Poskrebyshchev puts papers in neat stacks. One piece of paper slipped - right under Nastya's feet. Nastya closed her eyes with her hand: I'm not interested in your secrets. "These are not secrets," Poskrebyshchev laughs. - This is Comrade Stalin sometimes sits at meetings and draws devils on paper, and I have to collect and burn these papers. - How to burn? Nastya went cold. - To the museum! "These are not paintings. A man just sits, thinking, and draws automatically on a piece of paper. - Go to the museum anyway! - Nastya looked at the leaflet, handing it to Poskrebyshchev, and a wave of disappointment washed over her: this is clearly not suitable for a museum. The entire leaflet is painted with wolves and devils. But the drawings are by no means divine, they cannot be compared with either Raphael or Rembrandt. And Nastya secretly confessed to herself: Stalin draws badly. Even worse than Pablo Picasso. The door to Stalin's office opened here: - Come in. Came in. - Comrade Streletskaya, your proposals regarding the hotel are interesting. But almost everything that you suggest, I have already implemented. You could not have known about all this.

- Comrade Stalin, logic leads us along the same path.

"But you went further along this path than me. Tell me about curtains ventilation and lighting.

- Comrade Stalin, eavesdropping is a good thing, but it is much more important to see facial expressions, facial expressions. Sometimes cunning people realize that they can be overheard and use signs to indicate to the interlocutor the need to be silent. It is important to see these signals. It is important to know that there is something between two people that needs to be hidden. In general, visual observation of a person in a situation where he does not expect this observation gives more than any eavesdropping. The new ventilation system in the Moskva Hotel will have powerful inlet and outlet air pipes. To breathe well. The ventilation system will reduce the useful volume of the building, but will allow our people to move freely through the ventilation shafts and view the rooms through the ventilation grilles. In order for visual control to be carried out at night, it is necessary to remove all heavy curtains from the windows, replacing them with light translucent ones. The windows in Moskva are wide, you just need to light them well from the outside all night, then the rooms will be clearly visible around the clock.

- If the line of logical reasoning has led both me and you to the same conclusions, then a great leader can guess the same.

- Someone will guess and be careful. Someone won't guess. There are hundreds of rooms in the Moskva Hotel, and you can learn something interesting for 365 days a year. And if one of the big leaders assumes that they are eavesdropping on him, then it is difficult to assume that they are also eavesdropping.

- Fine. Comrade Holovanov, we urgently need to order in America the best specialists in ventilation systems. – I am already dealing with this issue. - It is necessary to create such ventilation systems so that when our people move along them there would be no roar. - This is a matter of technology, Comrade Stalin. - And so that the sound from one room through the pipes would not be transmitted to another room. "We will foresee everything, Comrade Stalin.

- And so it is necessary to do so that these Americans do not blurt out later our secret.

- I'll take care of it, Comrade Stalin. – But how to make the top leaders stay at the Moskva Hotel when visiting Moscow? If we prescribe it to them, they will be on their guard. And without a prescription, they can stay at the dachas and apartments of their friends, in other hotels. At worst, they each have their own

a wagon or even a train with bedrooms, bathrooms, libraries, restaurants and everything necessary for life. We equip a hotel, but they will not stay in it. This is what you didn't think about.

Nastya the Firebird looked into the tiger eyes of the leader of the peoples and she said softly, “I

thought about that. While

Comrade Stalin gave Holovanov an expressive look, Nastya for some reason remembered Sevastyan. And his cards. How is the cell search going? Open the camera. Four are searched. Forced to undress. Search the clothes again. Looking at the naked. Forced to move to the wall. The entire cell is searched, starting from the door in a clockwise direction, then the clothes are searched again, then the naked people are again examined, then the cell is searched from the door counterclockwise. What is not searched? Right! Nastya wanted to scream with joy, but remembered that

they sit in Stalin's office and discuss a completely different issue.

- I thought about it, Comrade Stalin. We need to advertise the hotel. “We are communists, we don't do advertising. - We will make advertising not direct, but indirect. The best strategy is a strategy of indirect action: if we want to destroy Germany, we must strike not at Germany, but at Rumania. This is exactly how it should work in the field of advertising. It is foolish to announce that the Moskva Hotel is the best in the world. This is a frontal attack. She cannot be successful. We will go the other way. We will make sure that in all the most memorable moments of life, the image of the Moskva Hotel is in front of the eyes of each of our leaders ...

- Do not pause, comrade Streletskaya, I am intrigued enough. "The most important, most

memorable moments of a person's life are marked by drinking. It is necessary to release a new good brand of vodka especially for the top management and place the image of the Moskva Hotel on the label of a vodka bottle. Something important happened in the life of the leader - he drinks vodka, and the image of the Moscow Hotel is in front of him. This image penetrates deep into the subconscious, especially in moments of intoxication and falling asleep: the memorization mechanism is still working, but the mechanism of logical comprehension has already turned off. Therefore, the image we need is imprinted in the human brain in addition to logic, outside of it and contrary to it. Then the leading comrade remembers the best moments of his life, and at the same time this image arises. Professor Pavlov did such experiments on dogs. So, using Pavlov's method, we will imprint the contours of the Moskva Hotel into the consciousness and subconsciousness of responsible comrades. Like Pavlovian dogs. To draw them to this hotel, as in the best moments of their past.

– Okay, but the label will be strange. The symbols of Moscow are the Kremlin towers, St. Basil's Cathedral, the Bolshoi Theater can be a symbol, but to depict just one hotel on the label, one of many ... It will seem suspicious and strange. It will only seem strange at first. A week later for a new one

everyone will get used to the label.

- And what do we call this new vodka? The hotel is called "Moscow". It is located in the very center of Moscow, but Moskovskaya vodka is already available.

- Maybe we'll call it "Capital"?

Chapter 11

1

Russia in

darkness. But the dawn is already more noticeable.

"Glavspetsremstroy-12" - on a siding. To the right is empty. Left is empty. Special conductor Sei Seich is sleeping. He completed his work day. Nastya and Holovanov do not sleep. In an hour, a shunting locomotive with one platform will come up. On the platform, the usual cargo is boxes with coils of thin steel wire. Thin wire, but a lot of it. The boxes are not liftable. That is why the trains of the Glavspetsremstroy trust have special lifting mechanisms: accept some boxes, return others. Once a week, on the night from Friday to Saturday, a wagon of steel wire is delivered to the junction of the 913th kilometer. Coils from the districts flow in small streams, turning into streams at regional collection points. These streams, invisible to the outside eye, merge into a mighty information river that fills the bottomless ocean of knowledge.

Passage 913th kilometer is a collection point for information for the region of the Middle Volga and the Urals. And at some other half-stations and sidings now they accept the same boxes with coils.

Accepting cargo, reloading is not Nastya's business. There are special people for that. The job of a special courier on duty is to be near the cargo. In case of complications, immediately inform by prearranged radio signal that the cargo is in danger.

Where to report? Report where to go. Anyone who tries to seize the cargo, you just need to present the authority and say: call on such and such a phone. The uncle on the other end of the line knows how to explain briefly and intelligibly. In extreme cases, a powerful electric cable will be stretched from the electric locomotive to the platform with boxes under the cars: just press the button, and all the coils will be demagnetized. And they will become ordinary steel wire. In addition to everything (this is in the most extreme case), Seich Seich has five machine guns in a compartment in a spe

Thompson. The very ones with which American gangsters from Chicago like to appear in society. But now

nothing threatens the cargo. And there is no cargo yet. Glavspetsremstroy stands in the dark. Outside the window, the horseshoes of the sentry crunch on the

pebbles. And Holovanov and Nastya are waiting inside.

– Did

you understand everything? - All. "I won't go with you next time." You and yourself you can do. -

Yes, sure.

"Now I'll tell you where fate has brought us today. You need to know these things. It's right next to the Volga. Bridge ahead. There, on the left side, is Kuibyshev. And here, on the right, to the north of our junction, are the Zhiguli Mountains. Between the Zhiguli and Kuibyshev across the Volga, a dam is being built for the world's most powerful Kuibyshev hydroelectric power station. In the Zhiguli mountains, on the orders of Comrade Stalin, starting from February 1933, an underground city was being built. The Great War of Liberation is not far off. Now there are eleven republics in the Soviet Union, in five years there will be thirty or forty. This number will grow. Moscow will remain the official capital of the Soviet Union, but it is better to manage millions of troops and a huge, ever-expanding country with hundreds of millions of people from an unknown, inaccessible and impregnable center, which is specially created for this purpose.

- Dragon, we have the wrong organization of labor. -

You, Nastya, work for a week without a year, and are you going to teach us? - Not only

to teach, but I am going to break the entire information processing system and introduce a new one. I need one big wall for all these figures from the NKVD. - Shoot them all?

- No. Hang up... I need to hang all the photos on the wall. – I don't have free walls in my monastery. Everyone is busy. – Even not so. I need a hall. Not that big, but decent. - There are small cells. There is no free room. All are crammed with equipment or crammed with documents. "But I need to. I'd love to, but I can't help. There are no vacant premises. "Then I have to turn to a superior. Who do we have a superior? Comrade Stalin. When can it be seen?
- At least tomorrow. My security team is working. We're going to a circus show. Taming of wild animals. Beasts can go berserk and attack the tamer, it's our job as the tamer to protect. If you want, I'll put you on the support team. - And who is the tamer? - Stalin. Who else?

3

A special courier of the Central Committee must be able to do a lot. The main thing is the collection of information and their processing. But there is an emergency, and the command is given: "To leave!" It sounds disturbing and romantic, sort of like "Sentry! In the gun!

There was a time when Nastya worked on flowers, but today she has other duties. Today it is

water. In the Kremlin atelier, they fitted Nastenka into a short dark blue dress with a white collar, white lace cuffs, and a white apron. I looked at myself in the mirror - I liked it. But where should the Luger go? You can't hang it on your belt, harmony will be broken. That's why Sey Seich's gun is in his bag. Sey Seich is the main person in

charge of water. He has water in a special thermos. Sitting Seyich backstage. Three-liter thermos, next to it is a bag. In the bag - Nastein "Luger" and something else. Sei Seich's task is to make sure that no one approaches the thermos and pours something. Pour, however, is impossible - a thermos with a digital lock. Water from a thermos can be poured through a tap. Two glasses for water. Comrade Stalin will sit on the podium, and Nastya will sit on a silver tray for him

bring a glass of water. As soon as Comrade Stalin has drunk half, Nastya will bring him a second glass, and take the first one.

Here is such work. From behind the scenes, Nastya will watch the glass. And Sey Seich too. A meeting for the whole day, and we must not take our eyes off the Stalinist glass. It is necessary to ensure that Comrade Stalin's glass is not changed, that nothing is thrown into the glass. From behind the curtains and the whole hall is visible. And Nastya will look into the hall. And Sei Seich. You never know. If anything, Sey Seich has a bag with him. In the bag, besides Nastya's "Luger", there is something else. It

is clear that Nastya will not be the only one to look into the hall. And not only Sey Seich. Many people will be watching. Here at least Lyuska Russula. Lyuska is dressed in the same blue dress. Also in an apron, also with cuffs, a collar, also with a silver tray. Lyuska will bring glasses to other leaders. Lyuska burns with envy: Nastya was entrusted with the glasses of Comrade Stalin, but she was not trusted.

4

We are all smart.

The stage is arranged in such a way that the whole hall is visible from behind the curtains.

Looks Nastya. Responsible comrades are seated, talking, the rumble in the hall is restrained.

Russell. They fell silent. Nastya looks into the hall through a secret window: all the familiar faces. She has all these comrades hanging on the wall, pinned with buttons: deputies of the People's Commissar of the NKVD, heads of the main departments, their deputies and assistants, republican people's commissars of the NKVD with deputies and assistants, heads of regional departments of the NKVD, also with deputies and assistants. A full hall, quiet and tense. And suddenly the hall exploded

with delight. Went in with applause. It's ringing from the ceiling. Like at the Hammer and Sickle factory, only louder. Nastya out of the corner of her eye - onto the stage. Comrade Stalin comes out, also claps. And the other chiefs next to him are clapping.

Sat down. And the hall sat down. The room calms down. Quiet. Nastya nodded to Lyuska, and the two of them left. Behind the leaders. Nastya has one glass for

tray, Luska has twelve. But this is not visible from the hall. Nastya placed a glass from behind Comrade Stalin's back and immediately helped Lyuska to arrange the other glasses. For both of them to leave together. So that there is no impression in the hall that Comrade Stalin has a separate service.

Glasses should be placed in front of the leaders so as not to splash, so as not to pour water on the leader, so that this work does not distract the attention of the hall in any way. Finished quickly. And Comrade Mikoyan is already on the podium telling how enemy agents poison cattle on collective farms, how they weave conspiracies, how they toss nuts on machines, how they spread hostile rumors, how they poison wells. Comrade Mikoyan tells the story, and Comrade Yezhov whispers a secret into Stalin's ear. And the whole audience was not staring at Comrade Mikoyan, but more and more at Comrade Yezhov's lips. I would like to sniff out the secrets by the movement of the lips. Will not work. Comrade Yezhov is vigilant,

covering his lips with his palm. Comrade Mikoyan talks about how the mercenaries of capitalism burn crops, how they cut the piles of bridges, how they drag multi-ton blocks onto the rails into tunnels.

He listens to the audience with respect and attention. Each deputy head of the regional administration can tell not such passions. And so he listens. Trying to figure out where it's all headed. Here's where: -

The enemy has unbelted, he has ceased to be afraid. Is it because he stopped the vigilance of some Chekists dulled?

Here it is. Shut up the hall. Is it because the enemy feels calm because he is sure of impunity? Isn't that why... Steps from the depths of the

hall. Hall freeze. Everyone must look ahead. To Comrade Mikoyan. To Comrade Stalin. And at Comrade Yezhov whispering. And you can't look back. You are not supposed to turn your head, you are not supposed to look back when such an important speech thunders from the stage. Comrade Mikoyan reports such horrors that he can't even believe it. It is difficult to listen to

Comrade Mikoyan's speech. Comrades in the hall catch the sounds of footsteps more. It's hard to hear anything other than those steps. From the farthest end towards the stage, someone slowly paces around the hall. Everyone understands: in vain no one will walk around the hall,

when Comrade Mikoyan makes a speech, when Comrade Stalin listens to her.
Nastya

can see everything through a secret window. This is Holovanov walking around the hall. Walks calmly. Not in a hurry. And two in gray with him. The comrades in the hall do not dare to look at Holovanov. The comrades in the hall are looking at the presidium. And each shoulder, as it were, is covered from steps. Everyone to the left of the aisle moved a little to the left. Everyone to the right of the aisle, to the right. It seems that the magnetic field pushed everyone a little apart from the pass

Holovanov touched the head of the Omsk department of the NKVD with his hand. Major of State Security Comrade Khvatov. Comrade Khvatov turned to Kholovanov quietly, and a question without words: me? Holovanov to him also politely, with a nod, without words: you.

Comrade Khvatov got up and left the hall. Crouching down. Quietly. To not creak. So that Comrade Mikoyan, who is speaking from the rostrum, does not interfere. So as not to break the silence, so as not to obscure the prospect of the presidium with your head. With his appearance, comrade Khvatov apologizes for the anxiety.

Went out of the room. And two in gray
behind him. But

Holovanov remained. Just stepped into the shadows. For the column.

5

Looks Nastya in the window. Amazing concert. And on stage - amazing, and in the hall - amazing. Comrade Mikoyan came up with an endless speech, and again Kholovanov was walking along the aisle, and two people in gray were with him. And again the force field of the head from the passage to the walls squeezes. Comrade Mikoyan is talking about sabotage in chicken breeding, and steps on the carpet are approaching. And again Holovanov touched someone's shoulder. And the turn of the head: me? You. Who else? And the comrade enemy went on the carpet tiptoe. To

the exit.

Comrade Mikoyan - about wrecking at the logging site. The hall completely froze. It's not in the eyebrow, it's in the eye. He only said that in the camps the timber is not felled like that, and already two in gray touched the head of the Amur logging camps department on the shoulder: let's go. Nastya looks into the hall,

changes notes: the more enemies are taken out of the hall, the more furiously the hall applauds the speaker. In place and out of place. And exclamations: "Glory to the Great Stalin!" Either one jumps up, then another: "Glory to the great Stalin!" Comrade Stalin does

not hear these exclamations. Comrade Stalin listens to the speech. Comrade Stalin is woven out of attention, fashioned out of attention. They don't seem to be shouting about him. The hysteria is spreading around the hall, but he doesn't care. He does not even notice how much he is loved, how they are ready to lay down their lives for him on the altar of the fatherland.

It is difficult for Nastya to understand Stalin's tactics. Nastya looks through a hidden window, she cannot understand one thing: why did Comrade Stalin Kholovanov let him do such a thing? This practice is contrary to the theory of cannibalism. If everything is done according to science, then it is not Kholovanov who is put in this business, but the Chekists themselves. Let them arrest each other, let them torture each other, let them shoot each other in the back of the head. So that the instinct of cannibalism is not dulled. So that no one would trust anyone. So that everyone is afraid of everyone else.

And hated. On

the other hand, do Yezhov's Chekists not exterminate each other enough? No, the instinct of cannibalism has not blunted. It's just that Comrade Stalin uses different methods. Comrade Stalin throws opponents like a good sambo wrestler - with both left and right grips. Comrade Stalin, as a good sambist, does not repeat himself. Comrade Stalin, like a good sambist, is unpredictable

at any moment. Most people are afraid of uncertainty. Here it is, uncertainty. He walks around the hall in sparkling boots.

Then the Firebird realized that the only way to keep all these comrades under control was fear. Every day, Comrade Stalin must demonstrate his power to the Chekists, every day to prove it.

And one more thing: Stalin needs to make Kholovanov an enemy of all Chekists. So that everyone, down to the last security officer Kholovanov, personally hated and personally

feared. To come to an agreement with Kholovanov could not. So Comrade Stalin does not retreat from the theory of cannibalism. Not one step.

Comrade Mikoyan concluded his speech. He called on the Chekists to learn proletarian vigilance from Comrade Yezhov in the same way that Comrade Yezhov learns from Comrade

Stalin. The hall rumbled with applause, like lightning split the sky, like crashed into a six-hundred-year-old oak tree, breaking it in half.

Close your eyes and you will hear that another mighty tree with a terrible blow crushed the wood into pieces. The hall rumbles with applause, like lightning they break an oak grove into chips. Nastya looks at the ceiling: if you hit the resonance, the ceiling will collapse. This is known from the course of elementary physics. It will be necessary to tell Holovanov where the danger is. And then next time the ceiling with walls and balconies will collapse. Let's clap.

The hall thundered. And the speakers from the podium went to praise Stalin's wisdom. And the speakers went to call for merciless terror, for the extermination of enemies, no matter how skillfully they disguise themselves, no matter what masks they hide. The audience slaps the speakers. Approves. Hall required: Death! Of death! Of death! Do you want death, comrades? It's possible.

This is please. It's as much as

you want. Here you are, if you really want to: Kholovanov is coming again. Not in a hurry. In the back rows that he passed, there is relief. The faces in the back rows look like they were each carrying five sacks of cement, but then they dropped them and sat down under the wall: eyes to the sky, tongues out, a stupid smile on their lips

happiness.

The more rows Holovanov goes through, the more relaxation in the back rows, the more tension in the front rows. But Holovanov

went through all the rows and up the stairs to the stage. Presidium stopped. Just now it was fun on the stage, here on the stage they didn't seem to notice what was happening down there. The comrades in the presidium have perked up, the collars are straightened, the hairstyles. This is how recruits behave under the gaze of a ferocious foreman. Only Comrade Stalin is imperturbable. Only Comrade Stalin listens to the speech, shaking his head, either approving the speaker, or disagreeing with him.

Kholovanov looked around the presidium. Comrade Yezhov's eyes are shifty, Comrade Yezhov cannot find a place for his hands: his pockets are on his chest.

feels, the collar checks whether it is fastened. Only now he was chirping in Stalin's ear, and then the jaw trembled and fell off. And Comrade Mikoyan is restless. Comrade Mikoyan is wearing a tie. So - behind the tie itself, behind the collar of the shirt: everything seems to be buttoned up, it seems like the tie is tied, but it presses

a little. Holovanov did not take Yezhov. And there was no order for Mikoyan today. Kholovanov went to the podium, and the speaker over the shoulder: let's go ...

7

After the meeting of the top management of the NKVD - a banquet. In the Grand Kremlin Palace.

Rumor in the Kremlin corridors: Comrade Stalin ordered to invent some new vodka. Vodka is very special, only for executives. They say that vodka is called "Moscow-capital" or "Moscow - the capital of the USSR." Or simply "The capital of the USSR." They say it has an incomparable taste. Can't wait for the management

team to try it. After such a meeting, every leader wants to get drunk. It doesn't matter whether vodka will be called "Capital of the USSR" or simply "Capital". Joyful to everyone that carried today. Maybe tomorrow it will. And everyone is pleased that Comrade Stalin shows concern. He removes enemies with an imperious hand, with the same hand he favors people loyal to him. Is it bad: he ordered a special vodka to be invented for the management staff.

After the official banquet in the Kremlin - unofficial. He is being prepared at the Moscow Hotel. What is convenient? The fact that, drunk, you don't have to go anywhere. It is only necessary to write the room number on the right boot with chalk. And they will drag you to the room. Special lakeev are kept for that, so that the leaders are taken away by numbers. The leaders guess that Stalin is listening to the Moskva Hotel from the foundations and cellars to the very roofs. Get drunk - talk too much.

But how can you not get drunk after such a meeting? How not to get drunk, if it is there, at an unofficial banquet, that they will give this very vodka a try?

Another rumor. Unconfirmed. Knowledgeable people say that this vodka will be produced with different labels. If the banquet is in the Kremlin, then it will be served with labels on which the Kremlin towers are, if in the restaurant of the River Station in Khimki, then with labels on which the River Station is. But these labels have not been printed yet. But today - the continuation of the banquet in the hotel "Moscow", so they will serve this very vodka with labels on which this very hotel

"Moscow". Hard to believe this. The Chekists built the Belomorkanal and the Moscow-Volga canal, and Moscow became a port of three seas: the Baltic, White and Caspian. When the Chekists build the Volga-Don canal, Moscow will become a port of five seas, the Azov and Black will be added. Therefore, it would be possible to place the silhouette of the Moscow River Station on the label. As a symbol of Moscow - the center of the KGB channels. But putting the silhouette of the Moskva Hotel on the label? I don't believe it. That's impossible. What kind of nonsense an idle brain does not invent.

Chapter 12

1

The practical value of any amount of knowledge increases a thousandfold if the information is systematized - roughly speaking, sorted out. Dmitry Ivanovich Mendeleev, for example, for many years painfully tried to create a unified classification of all chemical elements, to logically link all their properties in one system. He was looking for a pattern that would allow for each element to find the correct one, corresponding to him alone. Found the pattern. As a result, he discovered the periodic law of chemical elements - one of the fundamental laws of the universe. All ferrums, argentums, aurums and plumbum Mendeleev not only sorted them into appropriate categories, but also revealed the mistakes of their predecessors: what, you say, is the atomic weight of beryllium? Somehow it doesn't fit in my table. Well, count. They counted - they took off their hats: Mendeleev was right, and the wise predecessors screwed up. Nine chemical elements did not fit into the periodic table, but all because their properties were determined incorrectly. They counted, checked, after that everything came together as in the balance sheet of a good accountant. So that's not all. Mendeleev laid out all the elements known to him like a mosaic, and in his table

some strange voids gape. Something is missing. Why? Yes, because a number of elements have not yet been discovered, science is not yet known.

Understanding the logic, Mendeleev was able to calculate the existence of eleven unknown to science, not yet discovered chemical elements and accurately describe their properties. All his predictions came true. Four of the predicted elements were discovered during the life of the great thinker, nine more after his death, some of them decades later.

What are the roots of genius? Is it not that Dima Mendeleev was the seventeenth child of his mother Maria Dmitrievna? Ah, there were times! Russian families were strong and prolific. What now? A Russian woman will give birth to 10-12 children and believes that she has fulfilled her duty to the Motherland, that this is enough. But if she hadn't been lazy, hadn't rested on what she had achieved, then, you see, some seventeenth in a row would be born a genius, like Dmitry Ivanovich.

Nastya Streletskaia is not at all the seventeenth child in the family. It is not this that makes her related to Mendeleev, but a clear awareness of a simple fact: shelves are needed. Lots and lots. Materials at the Institute of the World Revolution have been collected in abundance. And all the new ones come in short ciphers, detailed reports, coils of steel magnetized wire, briefcases, boxes, wagons. However, the coefficient of extraction of useful grains from the dumps of the information received is negligible. Small because mining is considered something more important than processing. Many intelligence agencies of the world sin with this: mining officers are considered romantic heroes, analysts are trouser wipers. Although the true heroes in all the greatest achievements of the intelligence services at all times were precisely the analysts. But in order for

the analyst to accomplish a feat, he needs to create conditions for work. He needs a quiet corner as much as Mendeleev needs a chemical laboratory. An analyst cannot do without a place in which no one would distract him from his thoughts, in which he could hang his maps and diagrams on the walls, spread graphs and calculations on tables. An analyst cannot do without a three-liter coffee pot, like Mendeleev - without alcohol lamps, test tubes, retorts and accurate scales. But first of all, the analyst needs shelves. Preferably in a separate room. But Holovanov has no free premises for Nastya. Therefore, Nastya decided to turn to the one who stands above Holovanov. To Stalin. The meeting of the Chekists was assembled by order

of Stalin. Stalin is the main, or rather, the only spectator of this exciting action. Nastya asked for security in order to be able to ask Stalin a question in person. And so the meeting ended. The corridor along which Stalin will leave, she calculated in advance. The building itself has three rings.

protection. Nastya was in the center of the most important, central, therefore she had access

to this corridor. And so I waited. Along the corridor - two, Stalin and Holovanov. They pass by, ignoring her. Breathless. She looked at Stalin, then at her feet. And I didn't dare ask the question. She pressed her silver dish to her chest. This is a reflex. This is an involuntary reaction of the psyche: the dish is like protection from some kind of threat, from an obscure, threatening disaster.

They passed by, only then Nastya decided: -

Comrade Stalin ...

Stalin stopped, but did not turn his head. -

Allow me to apply. "I

allow it," Stalin replied without turning around. -

Comrade Stalin, I want a hall allocated for me in the monastery.

Not that big, but decent. - Comrade Stalin, there

are small cells. There is no free hall in the monastery. Everyone is busy with equipment and documents, - Nastya Holovanov immediately interrupted. Stalin, still not

turning around, went on, saying how to himself, not listening to objections:

- Allocate a room. Not that big, but decent.

2

Nastya took off her apron, pulled on her harness, checked the pistol on her side. It's

a pity that the modernization of "Moscow" is just beginning. It's a pity. After such a meeting, the Chekists will get drunk. It's time not only to listen to them, but also to look after them. Nastya threw on a leather jacket - and into a dark corridor. Into a gloomy room, against a wall that opens by itself. We went down to the Kremlin station. They are waiting there. "Glavspetsremstroy-12" - ready. Only an extra wagon added. Nastya guesses: this is a wagon. Everyone who was arrested today, Holovanov is taking with him. Professor Perzeev for interrogation. Khiter Perzeev: he does not beat anyone, does not waste his strength, but only sympathizes: "Do you want to talk? We'll have to give you to bad people ... "

Knocks "Glavspetsremstroy": to-my, to-my, to-my. The car is full today. The girls are returning from providing a meeting of the top leadership of the NKVD. If they lived in Moscow, if they had a father and mother, if they had neighbors and friends, then everyone could be hunted down, studied, ambushed, bribed, intimidated. But girls cannot be hunted down, they cannot be tracked, they cannot be bribed, they cannot be intimidated. It is impossible because Comrade Yezhov himself is not allowed to know anything about Stalin's girls.

The meeting came to dinner, and then they appear in a flock, serve the delegates briskly, cheerfully, and disappear all at once. Like through the ground. Every time there are different ones. It seems that Stalin has a whole regiment of them. Maybe Stalin brings especially proven ones from which textile factory? Or students from some institute? Finished the job - and

all at once disappeared. You don't follow. Maybe they went down the subway? Maybe they have their own exit to Revolution Square or Sverdlov Square? Or are they taken out of the Kremlin by cars closed? Comrade Yezhov put people to the metro stations, watched all the gates of the Kremlin before the big meetings and after. It is not clear where the girls come from, where they disappear. In the Moscow Metro named after Comrade Kaganovich late in the evening, after all the stations are closed, you can't go in. The Moscow Metro obeys no one knows who. Even Comrade Yezhov does not understand. And Comrade Yezhov is not allowed to look for enemies in the Moscow Metro. And the subway is guarded by a special police department, which is subordinate to someone, but can you imagine who exactly? It is only clear that the owner of the subway is an imperious and ferocious uncle. So prying into the affairs of the Moscow Metro is not recommended. Buy a ticket and go wherever you want. And don't look back. Don't delay before closing. It turns out that there is no one to look at repair trains in the night metro. And therefore, Glavspetsremstroy

rushes unnoticed by anyone. Breaks out of the dungeon, rushing into the darkness. With a whistle.

The hall is double-height. That is, windows on one side and on the other. Empty hall. Intricate iron frames. The frames are multi-coloured glass. The last boxes of equipment are being taken out of the hall. The workers are hauling in a huge carved oak chair. Holovanov turns Nastya on, gestures: this is what she asked for. In the sense: get it and sign it. The wall to the north is blank. The wall to the south is almost blank: there is only one iron door in it.

But to the east - three windows. And three to the west. Windows in three human growth. Not just three heights, but above average. Comrade Stalin ordered Nastya to no longer be kept under sound control: anyone can listen to what people are talking about. Comrade

Stalin ordered Nastya to be assigned to analytical work. And create conditions. If Comrade Stalin ordered, then Kholovanov only had to stretch out, click the heels of his polished boots and answer clearly: "There are conditions to create."

What are the conditions? Finish the walls and piers with cork slabs. Where to get? This is Holovanov's concern. Kholovanov remembered Stalin's emphasis on the word "provide" and said nothing. Once ordered, then it will be provided. Cork slabs, two feet by two, two inches thick, are sold by the

British firm Erkol. The offices, factories and warehouses of this firm are near Reading. It's between London and Bristol. Send a plane to London and bring it back. How long? Holovanov gritted his teeth, but the plane drove away. Brought. They glued the walls. Nastya liked it. Approved. What was in this room

before? Maybe an icon-painting workshop, and that's why the windows are so big. Or maybe something else. The hall is exactly the kind that anyone engaged in analytical work should dream of. The old iron door was replaced with a modern steel one. And they put up a sign: "No entry!"

And clarification:

"Entrance is allowed:

1. Comrade. Holovanov.
2. Professor comrade. Perzeev.

3. Tov. Sagittarius".

Perzeev is a professor-psychologist. Works in monastery cellars. He and Holovanov are allowed access to a large bright room, which is now called the Hall of the Firebird. The hostess here is Nastenka. They are visitors, she is a permanent employee.

First of all, before the hall was classified, Nastya ordered to put a potbelly stove. The monks lived without heating, and she could, but with a twinkle, with a slight smell of smoke, with the crackle of resinous pine logs, it is better. And Nastya also ordered that long, wide oak tables be brought from the refectory of the monastery. They are two hundred years old. The legs are carved. Set it up like that so it doesn't wobble. Tightly adjusted, like tables with a floor of one stone cut down. They don't move.

That's all the conditions for work. Nastya is not picky. In the corner by the cast-iron stove Nastya set up a carved oak chair for herself. Not a chair - a throne. The back is about two meters high, all cut up with little devils and lion muzzles. Nastya locked herself in, melted the stove, sat on the throne and thought: where to start?

5

- Comrades, girls, today our dear Professor Perzeev will speak to you. Every day we work side by side with this extraordinary man, forgetting that he is one of the greatest experts in psychology in general and the psychology of cannibalism in particular. The girls clapped. Perzeev got up, blocked the sun in the window. - Comrades girls, the theory of cannibalism is the most interesting

science ... - And Marxism-

Leninism? - Hm. It is, of course, so. Hmm... Yes. Right. I would say this: Marxism-Leninism is beyond competition. Marxism-Leninism rises above all sciences and, of course, is the most interesting science, but immediately after Marxism comes cannibalism.

Perzeev's girls approved: you can't kick something like that out of the saddle. "So, who is this cannibal?" The cannibal is the most ordinary person who really wants to eat. We are all cannibals,

only we all had a delicious breakfast today, and we are all full. But as soon as ... In a word, cannibalism is the most interesting science in the world because it studies the psychology of a person who has turned into a beast. Of particular interest to science is precisely the turning point, precisely the line that separates human existence and bestial existence. The transformation of people into cattle is amazingly fast. Do not forget - we only have six thousand years of civilization lying on a light layer, and if you scratch it, then under this layer one hundred million years of hopeless atrocity will be found. Every person is again drawn to this atrocity, but not everyone admits that he is drawn. And not only the psyche pulls us into the abyss of atrocity - there are situations when you need to either die or devour your neighbor. Not even like this: devour your neighbor, or your neighbor will devour you. There is nothing to lose, and the strong devour the weak. Having once become a cannibal, a person usually remains one for the rest of his life, although he tries to hide it. It's like murder: you kill once, then again, and then you get involved! They are drawn into cannibalism faster than ordinary murder. Cannibalism is a stronger drug than killing without eating a corpse. A person is drawn into cannibalism immediately after the first act, rarely after the second. Forever. If after the first act of cannibalism a person will always have enough food, then even then he secretly or openly remains a cannibal. He can actively practice cannibalism or only dream about it, but this does not change things: he is a cannibal. However, like all of us. Soviet science, as the most advanced in the world, has a unique experience in studying the causes, conditions, processes and consequences of cannibalism. Our science had absolutely unprecedented opportunities for a comprehensive study of the phenomenon of mass cannibalism, especially in 1919 and 1920, as well as in 1932 and especially in 1933. ABOUT! Our science has made full use of the opportunities presented to it ...

- And you, professor, - Nastya could not stand it, - did you yourself see living cannibals? Everyone laughed. And the professor laughed: - Only in the basement under the bell tower I keep seventy-six cannibals. For experiments.

Everything in the world begins with an organization. In each case, it is necessary to come up with some kind of system, a scale of values, some coordinates to invent, in which facts and figures can be stacked and compared.

For a long time Nastya looked at the wall, and then put up a ladder and a photograph of the main client, Nikolai Ivanovich Yezhov, pinned it with buttons. Photo thirty by twenty-four. Cork so that portraits and pieces of paper are easily pinned with buttons.

Nikolai Ivanovich Yezhov - a starting point. Nikolai Ivanovich Yezhov is the closest friend of Comrade Stalin, and therefore the main enemy. Nikolai Ivanovich Yezhov is entrusted with the security of the country, the government and Comrade Stalin personally. And if so, then Comrade Yezhov is the most dangerous person.

Nastya walked away, bowed her head, admiring her work: a wall four human heights and a corresponding width. The whole wall is now soft and smelly: cork panels smell amazing. To dizziness. Cork slabs are impregnated with something exciting and intoxicating. On the wall with a stimulating smell - one portrait on four buttons:

a young chief of the NKVD, on the buttonholes of the star, like a marshal. Under the photo, Nastya pinned the shortest description: "Born on May 1, 1895. proletarian origin. Sings well. Art connoisseur. Unfinished lower education. He was treated for pederasty. Didn't heal."

7

Professor Perzeev knocked on the door, went in, praised: well done, Firebird, you need to have photos of clients before your eyes, look into the eyes of clients more often. Penetrate into the inner world.

Nearby, Nastya attached a photograph of Yezhov's wife - Zhenechka Khayutina-Yezhova with the characteristic: "She is devoted to the cause of the party. Shows revolutionary vigilance. Persistently studies the theory of Marxism-Leninism. Likes sturgeon caviar. Beats housemaids. Dressed in Paris. Owns the richest collection of women's clothing in Moscow. Favorite perfume - "Lorigan Koti". Favorite stones:

black sapphires; Ceylon emeralds, light, with inner radiance; diamonds are colorless or pink. He is well versed in the scale of transparency of diamonds. Summer spends in Yalta, winter - in Barvikha and resorts in Austria. Lives together - see special file 29/815. She cohabited with Yezhov when Khayutin was her husband. Immediately and briefly about Khayutin: "Enemy. Trotskyist. Terrorist. Pest. His wife is exposed in connection with the German, Polish and Japanese intelligence. Liquidated." Below the photographs of Yezhov with his wife and her ex-husband are portraits of Yezhov's deputies: comrades Frinovsky,

Zakovsky, Belsky, Zhukovsky and Chernyshev. Even lower are portraits of the heads of the main departments, central departments, republican people's commissars, heads of regional and camp departments. And their wives side by side.

It is important to know more about wives. If any wife commands her husband, then the portrait of such a wife Nastya does not place on the same level with her husband, but a little higher. To catch the eye. And if the husband is the head of the family, then the photo of the husband is slightly higher than the photo of the wife. But this is rare.

Not everything is clear with Yezhov himself. According to the records of conversations, it turns out that his wife rules over Europe like Bonaparte. But as soon as Nikolai Ivanovich gets drunk (and he often gets drunk), then here he is Bonaparte. Because the portraits of Yezhov and his wife hang side by side.

On the same level. Nastya connects portraits with threads. Everything must be brought into the system. To discover patterns. If people are friendly, it means to connect two portraits with a red thread. Each boss has a group with which he is bound by guarantee, and maybe even by blood. Each leader pulls his group along the career ladders. From each boss to the subordinates - red strings: their guys. Enmity is a black thread between two portraits. Secret ill will - gray. Here the gray cobweb immediately entwined all the portraits. Extramarital sex - a yellow thread. The club was not enough. Pederistic relations - dove.

Holovanov came: oh yes, the picture! Ah yes clever Nastya! It is a pity that Comrade Stalin cannot take such a picture to the Kremlin and demonstrate it. Nothing. Comrade Stalin himself comes here. Let's show. It's one thing to leaf through folders, shift leaflets, from

sneezing dust from stationery, another thing - a picture on the whole wall: one hundred main leaders of the NKVD and their wives right there, and mistresses, and

lovers. The entire wall is covered with mosaics. No wonder they drove the plane to London. It was not in vain that cork slabs from the Erkol company were transported. And how easy it is to puncture and pull the strings in case of changes in portraiture. Comrade Prokofiev was Deputy People's Commissar of the NKVD, he was transferred as Deputy People's Commissar of Communications, Comrade Berman was put in his place, then Comrade Berman was appointed People's Commissar of Communications, Comrade Ryzhov in his place, Ryzhov was shot, and Comrade Zhukovsky took the chair of Deputy People's Commissar of the NKVD. If it continues like this, then every three or four months it is necessary to change the portrait. It is rare that someone in this place, like Comrade Berman, can hold out for ten months. If everything is brought to a system, then it is not difficult to understand that Comrade Zhukovsky will soon have to be removed from the wall and a portrait of Comrade Filaretov will be hung in his place. But he hasn't been here for more than
hang.

And how easy it is to hang a new portrait on a cork wall! And with threads to connect with other portraits - red, gray, black, yellow, blue. On the other wall is a floor-to-ceiling map of the Union. Flags on the map are

republican and regional departments, camp departments, prisons, camps, restricted areas, NKVD sanatoriums, rest houses, holiday camps for children of NKVD leaders, forced labor camps for children of executed NKVD leaders. The picture is also impressive.

In the piers between the windows, Nastya placed the structures of related organizations. The system is the same: a pyramid of portraits of chiefs and their wives is the official picture. And you connect the portraits with multi-colored threads - and an unofficial picture emerges. Nastya places portraits of those who used to work in

the NKVD, and wonderful patterns bloom: for example, there is the People's Commissariat for the forestry industry, and if you look closely - a branch of the NKVD. The People's Commissariat of Communications - and all the bosses are from the NKVD. The construction of railways is again a branch of the NKVD. The development of the North - again the NKVD. The development of the Far East - a branch of the NKVD. Many construction sites - and all the branches. Many branches, there is not enough space on the walls.

All the walls are covered with photographs. All photos are interconnected with multi-colored threads. Nastya, singing, laid out a lot of papers on the floor. She suddenly froze. I listened. Ringing silence. She turned around sharply. Behind her are Stalin and Kholovanov. She was carried away by work and did not notice how they

entered. Stalin took a look at the walls plastered with photographs, with a gesture forestalled Nastya's impulse to explain the meaning: I'll delve into it myself. For a long time he looked at the intricacies of multi-colored threads, grunting, shaking his head either in surprise, or approvingly. And it seemed to Nastya that he was not only trying to understand everything, but also to keep in his memory all this man-made web. And behind Stalin's back, Kholovanov winked, vigorously clenched his fingers into a fist, thumbs up: well done, Nastyuha!

Chapter 13

1

Moscow is talking about Robespierre again. The people of Moscow show a particular interest in the French Revolution. Parallels arise. Churches were destroyed there, and here, with us. There is terror, and here, with us. There Robespierre was declared the Supreme Being ... hmm, there is no parallel here. There, Robespierre began to cut the heads of the leaders, and we have trials against the leaders. True, the heads are not cut off, but only shot through, and then Robespierre ... that. Their own.

2

Nastya hung posters with insignia of the Chekists on the wall. Here are the nuances. All the main departments of the NKVD have insignia like in the army, but there is a completely special structure in the NKVD - the GUGB: the Main Directorate of State Security. This structure has privileges and advantages. The primary rank is a sergeant of state security, and the insignia is like that of an army, border or gulag lieutenant. The junior lieutenant of the GUGB wears the insignia of an army starley. The major of state security is already the highest command staff. On his buttonholes are diamonds, like a brigade commander. There are ranks in the GUGB that are not found anywhere else in the world - for example, senior major of state security.

Someone didn't know languages very well when they came up with such a title. The major is the eldest. The senior major is like twice the senior. The senior major of state security has two rhombuses in his buttonholes. In all other main departments of the NKVD and in the army, two rhombuses are a commander. Comrade Stalin did

not regret the insignia for the Main Directorate of State Security. It's a pity, security officers

Stalin's care is not answered with gratitude, conspiracies are weaved. In the next room - thirteen thousand folders with the personal files of the Chekists-conspirators. These are only those that had to be eliminated over the past year and a half. Where is the guarantee that the remaining new conspiracies are not weaving?

3

Nastya sits alone. Where is the day, where is the night? The eyes are red. Sometimes they knock on the door: dinner. They bring good meals. But they take the same

ones. Untouched. Rarely

Kholovanov looks in: - What, Tsarevna-Nesmeyana, figured out? -

Didn't calculate anything. - I

would go for a run ... - We are still running, Dragon. Mark my word:

we run. - I would go to the bath to evaporate ... It will

be easier. "Let's get some more steam, Dragon." Let's get drunk again.

4

The month has passed. Two passed. The recluse sank. Turned pale face.

The conversations of the Chekists are incomprehensible. Rather, understandable, but not all. Between themselves, they call people not by names, but by nicknames. It's like a professional cipher. Frequently changed. Chekists are changing in whole layers. While the Institute of the World Revolution will figure out who is called by what nickname, a new generation has already taken commanding chairs and introduced new nicknames.

That's why you need to delve into it. It is necessary to collect pieces of information and bring them into a system. Everything is interconnected. But these connections are not always clear. That's all you need to connect. And this is work. Nastya works in such a way that she gets slightly nauseous from lack of sleep, she works in such a way that the circles are green in her eyes. It works so that the circles are black under the eyes. The possibilities of the human brain are catastrophically underes

Nastya reads folders, remembers, she is surprised at herself: there is so much to remember!

5

"No," Holovanov says. - It won't work that way. Won't go. Fly with me. I will forcibly tear you away from mental work. Order: dress in furs, we fly to Khabarovsk. Far to Khabarovsk to fly.

Landing in Kuibyshev, refueling. Landing in Novosibirsk, refueling, overnight. Then Irkutsk. Only - then Khabarovsk. The route is further laid - to Vladivostok.

This has a special meaning. While the plane is flying. In the cockpit - Holovanov, radio operator and flight engineer. And in the cabin, Nastya is alone - a special courier. Nastya wrapped herself in

polar furs, warmed herself. I don't want to move. The engines nearby roared, heated up. There is frost on the wings, and the engines from fat in a trembling haze and the tails of them are fiery. How much energy is spent on cooling engines! But someday people will reach the point where part of the engine heat will be diverted into the cabin and warm it, and then passengers will fly not in high boots, not in polar jackets, not in wolf fur, but simply in a coat or even raincoats .

6

Second landing in Novosibirsk.

Military airfield in the forest. Kholovanov took the plane to a distant parking lot. For such aircraft, a special place behind three rows of barbed wire. The tractor pulled up a filling tank. Engineers and technicians piled on the engines with screwdrivers. The formidable guard took the "Stalin route" under guard. The car pulled up. "Emochka". This is for the flight mechanic and radio operator. Their place is in the command hotel. These are not just crew members, but crew members of a Stalinist plane: to a hotel for colonels.

And for Holovanov (personal Stalinist pilot) and for Nastya (special courier of the Central Committee) - another car and another hotel. Government. It's on

the other side. In the forest, behind barbed wire, behind a green fence. Near the same airfield, only in a different world.

7

The country is rising, building giant factories, for example, the most powerful aircraft factory in the world, and the city of Komsomolsk is being built around the factory. The country builds on its own, lives in dugouts and barracks, but American engineers must be placed in such a way that one is not ashamed of the country of the Soviets. And therefore, in the picturesque forest near the future Komsomolsk, an American town is being built behind barbed wire and a green fence. It is being built according to American designs, using American technology and American building materials. Small cozy two-story houses. To make it pleasant to live and work: seven or eight rooms, a reception room, a kitchen with a breakfast room, a dining room, an evening room, a small swimming pool inside the house and another one near the house, a garage for two or three cars, basements for various needs and a small garden around. That's all. Enough for a family of two or three. A street of small beautiful houses, a cinema, an American store, a small restaurant, a clinic - that's the whole town. And security all around. Another example. A super-powerful metallurgical plant is being built in Magnitogorsk. Need armor

steel. Not far

away in the Ural forest behind a green fence is a town for American engineers. The country is building the Chelyabinsk tank plant - and again

an American town is being built nearby.

And so it is all over the country. For the leaders of our Soviet - American towns. American projects. Using American technology. From American materials.

This is how all people will live in the twenty-third century. Unless there are too many of them. And now, so far, it can be built only for those who are in the most responsible work. Only for those who lead the world to a world revolution, to universal happiness and equality.

The driver opened the car door, Nastya got out, all in fur. Fluffy, like a polar explorer. And Holovanov came out, also fluffy.

A small palace in front of them. White Palace in the blue Siberian taiga. American project. Clear straight lines. No frills. As the architects put it, the object is oriented horizontally. White granite. This is not the case with capitalists. Right. We must build for the ages. To build in such a way that the descendants would not be ashamed of their ancestors. Silence over the palace. Only the wind rustles in the pine crowns, not breaking the silence, but emphasizing it. The maid Nastya and Kholovanov

were led into the chambers. Nastya - the northern wing, Holovanov - the eastern. The name is a hotel, and therefore you expect to see wide corridors and red carpets on sparkling parquets. As everywhere with us. And expect to see doors to the right and left. But it's not like that. Here the floor plan is

free. As in a palace it should be, as in a spaceship of the twenty-fourth century. The main idea: do not let the eye cover everything at once. Therefore, there are no clear boundaries for rooms and halls, therefore corridors smoothly turn into stairs, and rooms into galleries and balconies. Because every turn reveals something completely new. That is why the doors of the chambers do not open out in a straight corridor, like Gorky Street, but into halls of an elusive shape with huge fireplaces, with wide sofa cushions, with a stream singing in the stones among tropical orchids, sliding from one hall to another, with a glass wall over a wooded cliff, with a real Siberian waterfall, which roars behind a transparent barrier, throwing its sparkling power into dizzying depths. Ah, they hit the palace where it should be. With a concept. So it is necessary to set up

a palace so that under the balconies and galleries a wild river roars through the cliffs to a crystal lake, so that the water dust of the waterfall closes the gorge, so that it swirls like a snowy fog in bad weather, so that rainbows sparkle in it from a sunbeam. Such a lake

choose in which the water is transparent to the very depths, in which every pebble at the bottom is visible, every fish in the stones. Such a lake should be chosen, in which, on that inaccessible side, ledges of burgundy granite cliffs are piled up directly from transparent waters, and from each cornice in the rocks golden cedars are torn into the sky. There you have to choose a place where the smell of the resinous taiga soaked the earth and sky forever.

Nastya threw off her high fur boots, wolf fur jacket, thick woolen underwear and light silk. Bath - a small pool, seething from the inside. Right next to her bedroom and a small Finnish bath. It's good to take off your heavy vestments after many hours of nauseating aircraft vibration and climb into a bubbling bath. Well then dive into the ice pool. It is good to lie down on the burning boards of the Finnish bath. Kholovanov could continue to drive the plane without spending the night in

Novosibirsk. In general, he can fly forty-eight hours in a row. But he came up with an overnight stay to tear Nastya from her papers. To ventilate behind the clouds, to drink the frosty air of height.

Quiet in the forest palace. Rarely does anyone stop here. And there are no servants. They asked Nastya, they asked Kholovanov: what's for dinner? Do you want to watch films? What exactly? Are translators needed? When to wake up? When is breakfast served? And what's for breakfast?

Questions exhausted, answers received, no more servants. Quiet as in an empty spaceship. Only resinous chocks crackle in the fireplace. Only the smell of smoke is a little disturbing. Only the distant noise of the taiga awakens vague memories.

Dragon and Firebird are alone. All night long. in the whole palace. throughout Siberia.

Chapter 14

1

In Khabarovsk they sat down at dawn. So Holovanov raised the plane in Irkutsk in order to be in Khabarovsk early. In the flight sheet - transit to Vladivostok. This is so as not to raise a panic, not to disturb local leaders. Holovanov calls the car not from the party committee, but from the nearest military unit. Again, why the noise?

Nastya changes clothes in the salon. Remove all polar sky-high. In this form, they do not go around Khabarovsk in the summer. Now she is wearing a skirt, a tunic with scarlet buttonholes, in the buttonholes - emblems: a sickle and a hammer of the 575th test.

Tightly the Firebird girded herself with a belt, checked the pistol on her side. I checked the fastening of the chain on the briefcase. Briefcase - in the left hand. On the left wrist, a steel bracelet was closed. Now the briefcase cannot be pulled out of the hands, except to chop off the hand. The car

of the commander of the neighboring fighter regiment approached: the driver and two guards with rifles. They still don't know where you have to go and

why. Holovanov said into the phone to the regiment commander the appropriate phrase for such a situation - and here is the car under the wing. And the

regiment commander himself is under the wing: would you like to demand something else? No, Holovanov does not demand anything more. And the regiment commander did not call the plane. It's just that the commander arrived on his own initiative: is everything all right? Would you like something

else? No. Nothing more Holovanov pleases. The commander may to increase the combat readiness of the regiment entrusted to him.

Nastya sat in the back seat: - In a big house.

2

The guards of the big house saluted. This is Nastya in her hands paper that they don't delay her at the entrance for a long time.

Up the stairs, past the stone statue: Lenin and Stalin on a bench. Nastya studied the location of stairs, corridors, offices according to the scheme in advance, therefore she goes to the boss's door without asking for directions. The plump aunt rushed to close the door with herself. Nastya gently moved her out of the way: gently with the edge of her hand under the chin - and slowly upward, slightly pushing back. Such movement disturbs the opponent's balance. The plump aunt flopped into her chair, and Nastya pushed past her toward the door. She knocked and immediately opened it, without waiting for permission.

A responsible comrade rises from the table, full of indignation: they don't enter him like that. Anticipating the wrath of the bosses,

Nastya introduces herself with a patter: "Special courier of the Central Committee Streletskaya.

Improved responsible comrade.

Nastya to him an envelope from a briefcase
about the five seals:

- Sign up.

Responsible comrade signs. And the pen trembles.

Opens the envelope. From impatience tears paper shreds.

- Return the envelope to me, on it is your signature in receipt. - Yes,
yes, how. He would

rather read the paper, but no, it takes two seconds
spend to return the envelope to her, pedantic infection.

Comrade deepened in reading.

The message is very short. I read it. Did not
believe. I read it again. Cheered up. - Congratulations. —

Do you know what is

written here? - I am a special courier of the

Central Committee and I know what is written there. It says there
Comrade Stalin appointed you Deputy People's Commissar of the NKVD.

- Yes.

- Once again, congratulations. We're flying out now. -
Like now? - So.

We sit down and fly. Comrade Stalin is waiting. - I have
to hand over everything.

- There is no need to submit. Now urgently in Moscow it is necessary to accept cases. Then come back and submit. Now lock the safe, seal it with your personal seal. Take the keys and the seal with you. "But at

least I'll call home so that they don't wait for dinner."

The plane is not waiting. Let's give a radiogram from the board. – But I don't have polar clothes, I will freeze on the plane. - There are clothes. I brought with me a size 47 high boots, a size 63 helmet and a fur jacket and trousers in the "largest, wide" size. The

responsible comrade did not say anything, but in his eyes it was read: "Look, bastard, we will fly to Moscow, I will become deputy people's commissar of the NKVD"

3

To Moscow - twenty-three hours of net flight time. Also landing for refueling. The way back - without intermediate overnight stays: Comrade Stalin is waiting. Hardly

responsible comrade on the plane. A rumble, rattling, vibration, cold steam pours out of the mouth, frost spreads along the bulkheads. But the courier from the Central Committee, apparently, realized that she had to press her tail if she was talking to a comrade of such rank. There, in Khabarovsk, her role is a special courier of the Central Committee, and on the plane she is an ordinary flight attendant. She was obviously frightened and behaved all the way like a model stewardess on a government plane: would

you like lobsters? Closer to Moscow, a responsible comrade has kindled. Deputy People's Commissar of the NKVD is not a pound of raisins. Should he be offended by the girl? Is it his height? Now deputy. And there, you see, and ... And the girl can be punished in another way. It's a pity we didn't stay overnight in Novosibirsk. In ordinary clothes in a girl, a lack of meat is visible, but dressed up in furs - it seems to be nothing.

And the pilot, Balabanov or Kalabanov, whatever he is, also behaves correctly. He understands, watchdog, who is lucky, greeted a responsible comrade, stretching out to attention. Sat on Khodynka.

Nastya to a responsible comrade - "Luger" in the back of the head:
"You are under arrest. Don't rock and don't jump. Right hand carefully into the pocket. Don't look back. Get the keys to the safe and the seal. So. Throw carefully on the floor. Hands back. Comrade Stalin

waiting." It is not clear to Nastya why it was necessary for the fat man to feed lobsters on the plane, why to play politeness in front of him. As soon as he got into the "Stalin route", fasten his white little hands and let him fly in bracelets. He will start to run amok - fill his face, throw him out of the plane. So no, serve him all the way. She asked

Holovanova: why break a comedy all the way to Moscow? Kholovanov was silent for a while, then laid out: - So

Comrade Stalin ordered.

4

It's cold from the stone floor. The Firebird sits in polar fur boots. You need to keep your feet warm. On the shoulders is a British fur flight jacket. He wraps his knees in bearskin. To not be ashamed. Dark. Only a light bulb over her table. The lampshade is green. To not be blind. Maybe the circles are green from him, the damned one. It's cold in the hall. Does one stove-stove give a lot of heat? I need to put in a second one. The shadows are huge on the walls, on the windows.

She learned so much about government communications that it was time to appoint her head of department. And I figured out the quality problems, and the problems of closure, and many other problems. But the main problem is people. You can't deal with people. All tables are littered with folders, papers, diagrams. Nastya sets herself the task of unloading the tables from the papers. Does not work. To deal with one interesting person, you need to order folders from the store for twenty or thirty other people. You will deal with one, and an interesting thread stretched further. The vault has a special table on wheels. They will load the table with folders with personal files and Nastya is being taken. Only along the monastery corridors the wheels rattle. The problem is

the same as before any researcher: mountains of papers and still there is not enough information.

And the portraits on the walls no longer fit. Nastya ordered to set up a stand in the middle of the hall. On it - the entire leadership of the People's Commissariat of

Communications placed. Comrade Berman is above all. Comrade Berman is a starting point. And the description is short: "Born on April 10, 1898. From peasants. He was promoted to high positions in counterintelligence immediately after the revolution. Since 1930 - Deputy Head of the Gulag of the NKVD, since May 1932 - Head of the Gulag. From October 1936 - Yezhov's deputy. From August 1937 - People's Commissar for Communications of the USSR. Art lover. He was a member of the commission for the sale of valuables to America. He is suspected of stealing the Order of St. Andrew the First-Called on a platinum chain with diamonds (the total weight of diamonds is forty-eight carats) and the Order of the White Eagle with diamonds (the total weight of diamonds is seven carats). He was a member of the state commission for the sale of paintings by Flemish masters from the collections of the Hermitage. According to intelligence information, he deliberately underestimated the prices of canvases, for which he received large bribes from buyers (see special folder 27/135), bank accounts - UBS Bank in Basel, SBS Bank in Zurich (see special folder 33/741). He headed the construction of the Moscow-Volga canal. He secretly kept a brothel for high-ranking visitors and a harem for himself (

5

- Let's say, Firebird, you need to disperse a million-strong crowd. It's simple. It is necessary to pull out from the crowd of anyone, the first one who fell under the arm, and thrash him with his feet. To thresh in front of the crowd so that all the details are visible to those standing nearby. Thresh until the kicking stops. Then pull another one out of the crowd. And thresh. When we go for the third, the crowd will run. The monolithic courage of the crowd is made up of small fears of the units that make up the crowd. Task: split the crowd into units. Break unity into its smallest components. Divide and rule. Approximately the same work and Comrade Stalin. Only he controls not the street crowd, but the cabinet crowd, the crowd of boors and crooks who seized power. If Comrade Stalin is not

shoot them, they will devour the whole society and drink away all its wealth. In order to control the rulers, Comrade Stalin pulls out anyone and thrashes his feet in front of the rest.

6

An interesting picture is emerging in the People's Commissariat of Communications. Those who used to serve in the NKVD are sent here. Because the portraits are mostly connected with red threads. All your people. All. Only one exception. They sent a major to them last year, who graduated from the Military Electrotechnical Academy. My name is Major Terenty Peresyarkin. Works hard, judging by the records of conversations, for everyone. Those who are from the NKVD do not understand everything in matters of communication.

On the stand, a portrait of Major Terenty Peresyarkin is at the very bottom. Black threads stretch to him from all sides. Everyone hates him. From Berman himself to Peresyarkin - a black thread. Peresyarkin would have been shot a long time ago, only then communication in the country could go wrong. That's why they endure. Nastya

demanded a case against Major Peresyarkin and all the reels with tape recordings: a tough man, he goes through life - he does not bend, he has the audacity to remain in his opinion, he cursed with Berman himself in the office. It would be

necessary to report to Comrade Stalin.

7

- Sevastyan Ivanovich, would you like me to tell you where you hide your cards during the search? "And how do you know that?" -

Calculated. - Well, tell me, once you figured it out. - I'll just tell you. No one else. Play for health. Everything is clear with your cards. You just need to remember that the guards do not check during the search.

- They, my daughter, check everything. So harmful. We even in butts shine like a spotlight. -

That's right, Sevastyan Ivanovich, they check everything, except ... Holovanov's pockets. When he enters, you put a deck in his pocket. When it comes out, take it back.

Sevastyan laughs:

- In general, so, my daughter, since you are so smart, I will tell you my secret. There was a moment in my life: they buttoned up my white hands, imprisoned me in a prison. And the tower breaks. Then they brought it here. Teach, they say, your own business, otherwise ... I decided: I will teach, but I won't tell you the main thing. Here, in the monastery, I have been blowing my trumpet for eighteen years, I have taught many of your craft, and I will be the first to tell you the main secret. It is a pity to die and take the secret of the craft with you. And I liked you. I'll tell you, you keep it. Tell another, but only to one whose soul is pure. Tell it once in your life and only to the one who will keep it. Tell only to someone who will also open it only once and only to someone who considers a real person. So so. How to twist hooks in a hole, I'll show you. You don't need a lot of mind here. The main thing is not this. The main thing is different. You have to love the bear first. Understand? To love with all my heart. And don't demand anything from him. And don't want anything from him. A bear cub is like a builder, like a poet, like an artist, like a writer. The artist who paints a picture and already calculates in advance what money he will receive for it is bad. And his picture will turn out crooked, and people - herrings. And they won't give him money for it. An artist must be a creator. God at his picture. You must love your creation while still in the concept. Or a builder: there are good builders who love a house even before they start building it. They love every stone embedded in the wall. They love every carnation driven into the wall. He who loves his work will find success, and that house will stand for centuries. Do you understand?

Understood. – And in our business everything is based on love, it begins and ends with love. You love him. You don't consider him a piece of iron cold, an armored safe. Well, imagine that he is a gentle creature, vulnerable. As long as the safe is full of money, everyone loves him so much, everyone bridges to him. And how empty, so no one needs. So insulting to him, the safe. How insulting to a person: with money and fame - all of you

they love, but as the money went away and the glory faded, so everyone turned away. Isn't it embarrassing? So you fall in love with a safe not for money, but just like that. Love for strength, for weight, for its impenetrable sides. And kindly to him. But so that there is no such thought in you: I will open you and clean you. He will not open to a selfish soul. Give him your love, don't ask for anything in return. Give it back. Maybe he will open himself. Everything in the world is based on love. Love your work and it will love you. Love people and they will love you. Don't pretend you love. Love! I tell you three

times. A ray flashed behind the back of the painted bear cub, it seemed to Nastya that his head was in a golden glow.

- Sevastyan Ivanovich, are you ... a saint?

Chapter 15

1

Rarely Nastya returns to her room. Okay here. The rain is pounding on the roof. Warm, cozy. The stove is singing. The stove is the same as in the hall, only here the room is small, there is enough heat. Nastya decided to appoint a rest for herself.

Picked up the phone: - Lunch
in the forty-first

room. - It's two o'clock now. - Is it true? I didn't even
notice. Well, figure

something out. - Now let's figure it out. The Institute of World
Revolution does not sleep. Lunch will be served to you at any time of
the day or night. You can

call it a late dinner or an early breakfast. As you like. The Institute
of World Revolution operates. Telegraphs chirp. Parse cipher texts. In
libraries and document repositories, girls like Nastya bent over plump
folders. Glavspetsremstroy is pulling up wagons with coils of magnetic
wire. Soldiers of the external guard are unloading green boxes filled
with incomprehensible things. Airplanes are buzzing at the airport.
Groups of some people go into the darkness. And

Nastya decided to rest.

Raindrops are dripping, flowing over the slanted glass. How nice it
will be when she wakes up one day and the window in the sloping roof
is covered with snow.

But there is no snow yet. While the rain in the black window. The rain is pounding, the storm
is howling, the chimney is

buzzing. Knock on the door: your lunch.

2

People will have a good life after the world revolution. Just to live. But a good life even before the world revolution: on a tray is a plate with slices of hot white bread, lightly fried in butter. This is how the French eat. Cold wine in a bottle. Not anything - Chablis. The white meat in the lettuce is smoked pheasant. Also on the platter is a vase with fragrant apples, Caucasian grapes, and tender peaches. In addition to everything - a hot silver coffee pot. Simple and modest. Nastya poured herself some wine. She took a sip and thought. He sits on the bed with his back to the wall, and the glass remains at his lips. Nastya decided to arrange one real rest for herself in many weeks: she decided to sleep five hours in a row, maybe even six, then get up in the morning and wander

through the forests around the monastery, just like that, and after that again to work for many weeks. Only here is the problem: her brain cannot get out of the working rhythm. That's why hot bread gets cold, cooked the way the French like it. Nastya forgot about the smoked pheasant. I forgot about the

wine in the glass that she holds to her lips. Not for wine. Maybe call someone? Maybe someone else in the monastery does not work after two in the morning, but still does not sleep? Nastya looked at the receiver with a long uncomprehending look and suddenly grabbed it: - Operator, this is the Firebird.

Holovanova to my room urgently. She hung up. Got dressed. Again she grabbed the receiver: "Send Kholovanov not to my

room, but to my hall." - There is no Holovanov in place. - As soon as it appears, drive to me.

Down the corridor. Darkness. Night. Somewhere the windows are glowing, but between the houses it is dark. The rain is lashing, the wind is tearing the cloak. Nothing, nothing, soon the investigative building, and there along the corridor - to his hall. Here is the farm of Professor Perzeev. You can go through the courtyard, or you can go through the cannibalistic basement. Past the cages with cannibals.

People have always been drawn to death. Crush a person on the street - a crowd around. Stares. Why stare? And there is something to see. Nastya the Firebird is the same person as everyone else. She, too, is dying. And if there is an opportunity to look death in the eye, who will miss such an opportunity. She doesn't miss out.

4

Rumor in the monastery: The Firebird calls the Dragon to him at night. In which room it requires, the Dragon runs into such. Wherever the Dragon is, whatever he does, he throws everything - and to her. Any time of the day and nights.

5

Nastya came to her room, looks at the walls, understands the mistake. I set up a ladder and let's tear off all the photos from the walls.

6

Holovanov appeared at nine in the morning. Entered: in the hall a rout. Photos torn off the walls. How much time, how much work it took for everything, and now the foolish girl destroyed everything in one fell swoop. - Stupid from overwork? -

So no. How are we going to fix it all now? - No need, Dragon, to restore all this. We need to create a new picture. The error is this. For clarity, I used large photographs, but I need small ones, eight by twelve.

"So you won't see a damn thing under the ceiling!" - See if you want. You put up a ladder. I'll tell you what's wrong. I used large photographs, so the leadership of the NKVD fit on one large wall. on other walls and

on the stands - the leadership of related and related organizations. It turned out a lot of separate structures. But it's not right. The NKVD, the People's Commissariat of the Forest Industry, the People's Commissariat for Communications, Glavzoloto, the Main Directorate for Capital Construction of the People's Commissariat of Railways, the construction of highways, Dalstroy and so on - all this is one structure. Single organism. So you need them all - on one wall. Photos - smaller, but sculpt more densely. And connect all of them with strings, then a single organism will turn out. Only then will we see the correct picture of their power.

7

Major Terenty Peresyphkin stopped coming home. What's the point? Metro, then a trolleybus, then another bus to wait. And he is not. You get to the house, and there is already a messenger on a motorcycle waiting: you are called. The major had the imprudence to study well at the academy, and by distribution he had the misfortune to get not into the army, but into the People's Commissariat of Communications. Protested. Proved. But they explained: in peacetime, all the country's communication systems are subordinate to the Chekists. This is logical. Someone said something - they should know everything. But during the war, all communication systems will be used for military purposes. It's about war, everyone sees it, because it's time to militarize the communication systems little by little. You are the first sign, then they will send more

soldiers. Peresyphkin got into the people's commissariat and whistled drearily: everyone in the people's commissariat is security officers. He is with them with all his heart, but they are the chosen ones, and he is a black bone. He is not of their blood. And they talk about something of their own, very distant, and they have their own language, and their manners are not the same, even the military ranks are not the same: he, the major, wears the insignia of a major, and their majors go with the insignia of colonels. And they call people nicknames. Talk about someone - you never exactly.

In a word, got it. Terenty Peresyphkin does not hope to live before the war. Upon graduating from the academy, he received the rank of major, and this is clearly his last rank. In such an environment, you will not get any more. How not to lose it. Why is there a title - to save the head. Works during the day, works at night. At night, being alone, he decides in the morning

to succumb, bend over and smile like a dog to all the Chekists. But morning comes, and Major Peresyarkin cannot smile in a way that they like. Character does not allow. I'd love to wag my tail, yeah

does not exceed.

They see the Chekists: Major Terenty Peresyarkin does not bend. They see that it would be time to shoot. Yes, all hands do not reach. For the time being, fate favors Terenty

Peresyarkin. He is surprised at the twists and turns of fate, but he himself is already ready for arrest, torture and death. Waiting from day to day. From

hour to hour. At any moment. Chekists around are also surprised. Every morning they greet Peresyarkin with astonishment: "Haven't you been shot yet, Terenty?"

Chapter 16

1

- Those who seize power should be shot, I understood this a long time ago. But I don't understand otherwise. If you shoot a little, then you will not hold power. But if you shoot a lot, you will lose power. How to find the optimal

level of terror? – I think that this level can only be found in everyday practice. I believe that Comrade Stalin intuitively feels the level that must be reached, and the line that cannot be crossed.

2

“Mr Humphrey, I have a business conversation.

- I hear you, Mr. Holovanov. - Stay another year. - No, Mr.

Holovanov, it's time for me to go home. In America. I'll pay you twice as much. - No, Mr.

Holovanov. It's time for me. - OK.

Fine. But there is a problem. - Which?

- The fact is, Mr. Humphrey, that you worked at a very delicate job ... - I understand,

Mr. Holovanov. “You know too

much. You will come to America and start telling everyone that Comrade Stalin is listening in on the telephone conversations of his closest associates. “Mr. Holovanov, I will

never tell anyone anything. “This is business talk, Mr.

Humphrey. Here is a business conversation.

- Yes, even if I start to tell, no one will believe me: according to the documents, I did not work in Soviet Russia, but in Switzerland. And my letters home were supposedly written from Switzerland. And you sent them, as I know, from Switzerland ...

- That's all right, but we have no confidence that you will keep your word. - I'll give you a receipt, Mr. Holovanov. - Receipt? This is good. You guessed it right. I just what will I do with your receipt?

- Like what? If I post anything about the system eavesdropping, you will sue me. I don't like courts. You can win in court, but you can lose. Therefore, the receipt is not enough for me. What other guarantees do you need? "Your life, Mr. Humphrey, is the best guarantee that you don't tell anyone.

- Do you want to kill me? - In no case. Only criminals kill people. I don't want to kill you, I want to eliminate you. - I protest and demand that you immediately call here

my lawyer.

- The lawyer is the prejudice of the bourgeois court. We are guided by the interests of our country and the world revolution, we do not need a lawyer who will prove that we are wrong. Even without a lawyer, we know that we are right.

"And you kill all the foreign engineers who work for your country?" - That's the thing, not all of them. We send

everyone who builds tank, artillery, aviation, automobile plants home, generously rewarding. But you did a very delicate job. And how many like me? – Read units. You are not the rule. You are an exception. - Who is next? – Three engineers who are installing ventilation systems in the

Moskva Hotel. "But in America they will. - Let them grab it. Everyone who is not supposed to return is registered by us in advance, not in the Soviet Union, but in Switzerland,

Brazil, Australia, Germany. We use this to our advantage: American engineers leave for many countries ... and disappear. But in the Soviet Union they do not disappear. Here they have worked and come back home with big money. Will you give my money to my family? No, we'll confiscate them. Sei Seich, accept the
briefcase, recalculate and draw up an act of
acceptance of the money that Mr. Humphrey earned. - Will a new engineer from America come to my place? - Yes.

3

Basement with safes. Nastya furtively puts a couple of bottles in the safe, a circle of good sausage, something else appetizing. Suddenly, Sebastian appears behind her. – And what is it? - Sevastyan
Ivanovich, this is a gross
violation of the regime. Why are we violating? - For the sake of
gratitude. You taught me
the profession. Very rare. - I taught many people, I receive gratitude for the first time.
“Sometimes I will leave here. You and your brethren. - Look,
daughter, do not get caught. You will not be pardoned. Here in
the execution pit is sent without trial and special consultation. - I, Sevastyan
Ivanovich, am cunning.

4

Tomorrow is performance.
Tomorrow is her first mass performance. There
are 417 executables on the list. There is no need to dig two holes for four hundred executables. One is enough. The hole has already been dug. They dug her reformed
urks. Everyone in the business has a stamp: “Stepped on the path ...”

The reformed worked with a clear understanding of the meaning of their work. Why else do convicts dig a hole in the forest under escort? They dug and glanced at the convoy: is it not for themselves that we are digging? And they decided among themselves: not for themselves. There are twelve of us, and the pit is five hundred people. They dug and rejoiced: it was right that they embarked on the path of correction. That's right, they reformed. Those who persisted will be buried in a hole.

5

Big office. The fan is noisy like an airplane propeller. There are three people right at the fan: People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, General Commissar of State Security, Comrade Yezhov, his first deputy commander of the first rank, Frinovsky, and head of the Kuibyshev Directorate of the NKVD, Senior Major of State Security, Bocharov. - The meeting was in the Kremlin. Right in the hall, he took ours one by one. But they were not taken out of the Kremlin.

Holovan appears in the Kremlin with his girls from nowhere and disappears in the same way. Like from under

earth.

– Maybe they have a secret passage in the subway?

- Gutalin will get to us all soon. But he is nobody! All his strength, all his army is us, the NKVD. The whole country is under our control. Everything is in the hands of the NKVD. He rules the country with our hands. If we do not want to obey, what can he do? Who can he rely on? On the womanizer Holovan with his harem? Who else? And this Caucasian Gutalin takes ours with his bare hands, and we are afraid to object. What are we afraid of? Whom? Mustachioed cockroach? - When Robespierre completely lost his temper, smart people cut off his head.

6

Nastya stood on the slope when the reformed pit was being dug. It is interesting to see any business in development. It is interesting to see the city in the taiga from

the first peg driven in the clearing, to wide avenues, to beautiful palaces, to hectares of glass roofs of the main assembly shop, to the first dive bombers taxiing out of the shop for the first test takeoff. It is interesting to see the majestic building from the first stroke of a pencil on a blank white sheet to the mounting of stainless stars in the clouds. It is interesting to see the place of execution from the first shovel, confidently crashing into the ground, to the last Christmas tree planted at the burial site. Kholovanov got up, spread his legs wide, looked around and said: "Here they

lie".

People with rifles cordoned off the clearing, and people with shovels dug into the ground. And now the hole is ready. Keep it open until the morning. And Nastya needs a good night's sleep. She will sleep in the special control group's rest home tonight. It's far from the monastery. It's three hundred kilometers south. It is on the banks of the Volga. Here the Holovanovsky guys have a permanent base.

The girls from the monastery rarely come here. Mostly people come here for execution practice. Today is the turn of the Firebird. Need sleep. And do not sleep. It is not clear how it is possible to execute four hundred people and so that they do not rebel. Start knitting with one hand, others will go mad. They have nothing to lose.

She thought for a long time, came up with nothing. Puzzle. And if you take away a kilometer, shoot and return for others? How many kilometers to wrap the convoy then? It would be necessary to choose shooting forests in reserves, in oak forests, centuries-old oaks bear millions of leaves, and each leaf is a sound-absorbing screen ... It is necessary in oak forests ... But how to dig holes? Oak trees have such roots. No, it's still necessary in pine forests ... Pines grow on the sand ... He shot, covered it with sand, leveled it, planted pine trees on top ... Then the forest will grow ... The crowns will make noise ...

Imperceptibly, the execution forest turned into a fabulous forest ... With a forest lake, with water lilies and lilies, with sedge in black water, with a playful stream, with a rock above the stream, with a magic castle on rock...

She walked through a fairy-tale forest, through flowers, which do not exist, pushing the branches of trees, to a castle sparkling over the lake ...

The alarm clock rumbled like an anchor chain across the armored deck of a cruiser. First thought: shoot the alarm clock and throw it in the execution room pit.

Second thought: push the button.

Nastya pressed and sat for a long time on the edge of the bed, wrapped in a blanket. Then I looked at the alarm clock and got scared - 3 hours 23 minutes. Down the hallway to the bathroom. The

women's restroom is empty. One Nastya. Washed, combed. I cleaned my boots from the evening and sewed on a fresh collar on my tunic from the evening. Therefore, it did not take her long to gather.

In the dining room, Aunt Masha, the cook, is pouring vodka. If the performers are raised at three, then when is Aunt Masha? Good cook Aunt Masha. He knows his business well. And kind. The cook must be kind. The cook must put his soul into the dishes. And yes, everyone should be kind. Aunt Masha did her best: the sausages in

the cauldron are smoking, the rolls are glowing with heat, only from the bakery, the potatoes have fried three pans, the cucumbers have been cut crispy, the cabbages with onions. She spills her own vodka. Take as much as you want, and vodka - one hundred grams. "Here's your portion,

girl." - Yes, I don't drink, aunt

Masha. - So it's supposed

to, daughter, on such a day for peace of mind

souls.

- She's calm for me. - And

it's not scary?

Nastya did not

understand: - Why be afraid? Looks like they won't shoot me

today. From all the tables, laughter and jokes: here, they say, what kind of shift is coming to us,

for nothing that a non-drinker.

Nastya blushed, lowered her eyes. Settled in the car. Laughter, laughter.

The faces are all familiar: the same guys who at the "Hammer and Sickle" factory posed like proletarians showed consciousness in thirty gulps.

Comrade Shirmanov is their chief. Strict comrade, and impudent eyes.

Comrade Stalin's Kholovanov is like the head of a personal secret police, and Kholovanov's Shirmanov is like a shock brigade commander: if

it is necessary that a brick accidentally fall on someone, so it's only to whistle Shirmanov - he will organize it in an instant. Top notch professional. And the whole team is

a match for him. Generally speaking, neither Holovanov nor Shirmanov, nor his whole team, nor the girls from the monastery should be involved in performances, especially in mass ones. Executes the sentences of the NKVD. But there are situations when it is necessary to liquidate those who in no case should fall into the clutches of the NKVD. According to Stalin's personal list, they are kept in the monastery by Holovanov. Sometimes the monastery needs to be unloaded. This is exactly the situation today. Got it. It's time to carry out the sentences. It's good for the Holovanovsky guys too - so that the instincts do not become dull. And the monastic girls practice: the world revolution is ahead, a big thing, a blood

The hand of the proletariat will not waver, that is clear. But in order to have constant confidence that the hand will not falter, girls are attracted to mass performances from time to time. Today Nastya fell out. For the first time.

Chapter 17

1

They spread raincoats on the ground, and gray folders on them. In each folder - the fate of man. Fate in piles. Each stack of fifty folders. And four more - in a separate small stack.

- The head of the convoy, did you check everyone? - Everyone, comrade Holovanov. "Then call the first party. Vesel head of the convoy:

- Antonov, Artishchev, Arkhipov ...

He called out the first fifty names in alphabetical order, built a group in a column of five. Three escorts in front, three behind, two with dogs on each side: step to the right, step to the left - escape, the convoy shoots without warning. And go ahead. The first

party went

to the forest. The rest are sitting. The lines are waiting. There is also a convoy around them. Also with dogs. While the group is being formed and built, the performers have nothing to do. Performers on the sidelines. It's none of their

business. When the first group disappeared into the forest, then stop smoking. They threw away their cigarettes, trampled on them with their boots - from one cigarette butt great forest fires happen - and forward. Catch up with the group. The column always moves slowly. The column is always easy to catch up. Caught up.

2

The gate creaked: come in. Behind the gates there is a forest clearing, all around it is surrounded by a green fence in two heights. Boards overlap. The glade is trampled down either by thousands of feet, or by herds of cattle. Looks like they're driving cattle.

along a forest path - they are driven into a corral, hold a little and drive further. There is nothing in that field. Only steel cabinets near the fence. The most common cabinets. Grey. At human height. At any plant, such cabinets are in the locker rooms. There are ten cabinets in the corral. Is it possible to change clothes before being

shot? Each cabinet has five compartments. There are holes in the doors at waist level. This is how it is done in factories - holes for ventilation. The cabinet doors are open. One of the wind - ding - creaked. Inside the cabinets - no shelves, no hooks. Otherwise, everything is exactly like on the Hammer and

Sickle. The guards - to the side, the column - to the paddock. They locked the gate. - Attention, enemies, do what you want, but on

the count of five I let the dogs into the pen. Dogs are torn from leashes. But you don't have to drop them. One protection for people in the corral from dogs is to hide in closets. There are only four dogs, and fifty people in the paddock. Only no one wants to fight with a dog if there is a steel cabinet nearby. Ran the stage through the cabinets. It's always like this: there's enough room for everyone, but five or even seven climb into one door at once,

scratch each other's faces and knock out jaws, and not a single one into the other. Scuffle, crush. Who is stronger - in the door first. Understood. All doors slammed shut. Ten cabinets, five compartments each. One in each department.

What is the most important thing in our business? Shoot in the back of the head? No girl. Not at all. The main thing is to separate them all. Divide the crowd into individuals. If they get mad, how do you stop them? So, in order not to get mad, it is necessary to do this so that everyone thinks only of himself. A smart head came up with these cabinets. Exactly five fits on a three-ton machine. Bring cabinets to any place and arrange a firing point. He fenced off the clearing, put up cabinets, and shoot yourself to your health. And count well. Ten cabinets - fifty places. We have 417 clients today. So, eight full pens with a tail. The main thing is to tie, but once tied, the deed is done: a fool knows how to shoot in the back of the

head. How far does the human mind reach! Everything turned out to be so simple. The handles in the cabinets are designed with understanding. How slammed

locker, so sit there. The door only opens from the outside. -

Attention, enemies! Take off the coats! It is inconvenient to take off a pea coat in the closet. Painfully narrow compartments. In this case, ventilation holes were invented. Our bayonets are long and thin, they fit into any hole. So with those negligent bayonets in the belly:

move, bastard! - Attention, enemies! Take off your shoes! It's harder. Don't bend over in the closet. Only if you pull the knee to the chin, untie the laces. Again with negligent bayonets falls. It doesn't seem to be deadly, but it's all the same disgusting - with a

bayonet in the ribs. - Attention, enemies! Everyone turn to face the wall, arms back. The guards went along the cabinets: to whom, the bastard, it was said: turn around with your face to the wall! And with a bayonet

there in the hole, with a bayonet. Hands back ordered!

Uncle Vasya, a knitter, groaned - now it's his time. There is a prisoner in the closet, with his back to the door, hands behind him. The door opens - what can he do against two bayonets and two dogs? And the dogs squeal with impatience. But dogs are no longer allowed to work. Uncle Vasya is a knitter and does it well. He has a steel bundle on his belt of wire. The wire was cut into pieces in advance: wrapped around the brushes, and with pliers and tightened. And

get out of the closet. There is nothing more to do there. - Take the first one!

3

And the execution went in two chains. In two streams. Holovanov is standing over the pit, shooting. Someone in gray nearby - the second number. One shoots, the other reloads pistols. Then the roles are

reversed. Near the second stream. Comrade Shirmanov is there with an assistant. Guys know knitted drag. The performer is pulled out of the closet, his hands are tied up behind his back, so that his head is bent below the navel, and he runs to the pit. At the pit, the hands are even higher

lifted up to the sky, so that he fell on his knees, and Shirmanov deftly commercials at that very moment - bang on the back of the head.

What is good to perform from a pistol? The fact that the pistol has a blunt bullet. A rifle cartridge (also a machine gun) has a pointed bullet. It is designed to fly long distances. She stitches through. A pistol dumb-headed - pushing: going to you will stop, kneeling - will overturn. A pistol bullet is good because it not only kills the person standing on the edge, but also pushes him into the pit.

- Comrade Shirmanov, let me shoot a little. - Well, shoot.

Cheerful accordion

player Vanya Kamarinsky stood up and went to make holes in the skulls. Just manage to pull up! Vanya was replaced by Syomka Belokon. There is also a replacement on the other chain: Uncle Vasya the knitter came running - everyone wants to shoot. There is enough work for

everyone to do. The convoy drove the second batch, dispersed it through the cabinets: take off the pea jackets, take off the boots, with their muzzles against the wall!

Thieves knit reformed pea coats in bundles of ten, and shoes in bunches. Here the order should be: first tie the boots and boots into pairs, then sort the pairs by size, then tie them into bundles - and into the car. And the jackets are loaded into the car. Any jackets. Ripped mostly. But come across and nothing.

Reformed, don't be fools, they'll throw off their pea jackets, as if from the heat, and into the general pile of them. And from the general heap grab another, which is better. And a bunch of boots. And there come across not very torn. So reformed them - to themselves. And theirs - in

a bunch. The convoy does not respond to this. Isn't the convoy the only devil? The main thing is that then there are enough jackets and boots in quantity. And if the reformed have changed theirs to someone else's, then this does not harm the cause. The work of the reformed is nervous, let them use it.

The thing seems to be simple. Bang, bang. And again - bam, bam. But it takes time. They brought in the third batch. Scattered through the cabinets. stripped,

tied up. They shot. Another one was brought in. To disperse the cabinets is a matter of minutes. And undressing is not a problem. Not a problem and shoot. Knitting with wire - that's the catch. Shirmanov threw all the performers to knitting. So that not one knits, but five or six people at once. Helped. Things went faster. And

reforged more fun. They just changed their jackets, and then the new party undresses. You look, and there is a better jacket. And boots. Out of four hundred people, someone will have new shoes. And you can choose a pea coat - you will admire it. So after the fifth batch, all reformed in brand new pea jackets, everyone creaks with new boots. Twelve of them. True, their work cannot be called easy. Pit - whose work? Their work. But you don't just have to dig a hole. You have to work in the hole. Carry the bodies in the pit. The bodies must be laid down. On the edges in order, in the middle - in bulk. They shoot about twenty people, stop shooting, reformed - in a pit, laying. The performers do a good job, but such is

the human race: the head is shot, but he is still alive. Then the application is up: here one is moving, finish it off.

Or the reformed themselves are finished off with a crowbar. The executors also help: as soon as twenty people are shot, they shoot in a bunch before they let the reformed into packing.

For fidelity.

5

At two o'clock Aunt Masha brought lunch: are the workers hungry? Holovanov

addresses the people: are we going to have lunch now or will we finish the job? He is a strict commander, but the work is intense, and at such moments people get closer. People understand each other perfectly, subordination now only interferes. Because Holovanov is democratic in such situations: what do you guys say? What do you

say? It is so good and so. It would be nice to finish the job, and then dine. Business before pleasure. On the other hand, things seem to be not much, only two parties are left with

with a tail, but after all, dig holes, draw up an act of work done, this and that. Anyway, let's have lunch. The clearing near the pit

is amazing. They scattered blankets on the grass, like a tablecloth. Aunt Masha lays out fragrant loaf of bread, slides tomatoes, cucumbers, pours borscht into bowlers. And vodka - not a gram. Vodka before and after. Strict: - Well, wash all your hands!

6

Knowledgeable people say that dreams are fleeting. It sometimes seems to us that the dream lasted for many hours, but it slipped into seconds. It's just that the intensity of the brain's work during sleep is completely different. In sleep, our brain lives a life separate from us, it can doze, but it can suddenly explode with a monstrous eruption of thought. In a dream, our brain can, against our will, compose immortal combinations of words and sounds, turning them into poems and melodies; in a dream, our thought can wander in endless labyrinths, or it can rapidly rush forward and upward to discoveries, refuting and overturning truths that cannot be refuted. When we sleep, our brains are a thousand times bolder. He is able to find solutions to unsolvable problems. He is able to see the future. And it is not for nothing that we sometimes find ourselves in a situation that we previously saw in dreams.

They say that even at the time of death, our brain works in a completely different way than in life. When blood flow to the brain is cut off, the brain seems to explode in its last super-powerful impulse. And it's not for nothing that those who miraculously escaped death, but were already in its clutches, say that at the very last moment they saw their whole life in millions of details. It is not for nothing that at the moment of a catastrophe, time seems to stretch. We see the locomotive rushing towards us as if we are watching frames of a slow motion movie. But time does not stretch, just in the remaining moments we are able to see and realize much more than in a normal environment.

Nastya looks into the faces of those who are being shot, freezing with delight and horror. At the moment when a bullet pierces a human head, the face of the person being killed expresses so many emotions, as if in a split second a person

I was able to hear the entire "Requiem" by Mozart at once or read "The Overcoat" by Gogol.

To each his own. One at the moment of death is overwhelmed with rage, the other with an unquenched thirst for revenge, the third suddenly understands the sweetness of humility and dies in bliss, forgiving enemies. Different feelings in people, but it is clear to Nastya that the feelings of those killed are not fleeting. Time flows for them in a completely different way than for those who are still living. In a fraction of a second, in the very last fractions, those who are killed have time to live, understand and feel more than they have had in many years, and perhaps more than in a lifetime.

The pit was filled from one edge almost to the very top. They immediately covered it with earth.

They fired back. Well shot. The pit is just not filled in on the other side. Well, this is not

difficult. Digging is hard, filling up is not a problem. Shirmanov draws up an act, Uncle Vasya - a statement of ammunition consumption. The Reforged

gather the last of their pea jackets and boots. Right next to the closets. Signed

the Holovanov act. He beckoned the dog breeders with his finger. Those signs bosses understand without prompting - with dogs to the cabinets.

- Hey, guys, - Holovanov reformed, - today we consoling four hundred and four little men, and in the plan there are four hundred and seventeen of you. You also included in the plan.

He didn't say anything about hiding in closets. You must understand yourself. If the dogs are released, then hide. And they were let down. Dogs need practice too.

Quickly reformed, they hid in the cabinets. Dogs only they managed to tear up three, and even then not much. They took the dogs away.

- Showed off in new pea coats? Are the new boots tight? Take it guys. Muzzles around! Hands back! It is written in your deeds that you have embarked on the path of correction, but in my opinion the humpbacked grave will correct it. Howling in the

iron booths, roaring. It's nothing. Howl, squeal - freedom on the special stage. At least meow if you like.

— Aunt Masha, we have twelve more. Don't want to shoot?

- Come on, you slackers, engage in murder. cum
Hurry up and come and drink vodka.

7

Why is shooting good?

The shooting is good because it smells of romance. Like in the Civil War. The smell of a fire, the smell of gunpowder smoke, the overcoat smelled of gunpowder. And the feeling of accomplishment warms the soul. Fine.

Four hundred and sixteen were liquidated, and there are four hundred and seventeen on the list. Another one. This

one is special. This is an American engineer, an expert in eavesdropping. This Holovanov personally shoots.

That's all. And
evening. Good evening on the Volga. The bream splashes in the floodplains. Because of the river the song floats. The steamer slaps its wheels. The buoys caught

fire. Red and white lights. Everyone on the execution team loves mass shootings. Because like a massive outdoors.

When ten, twenty, thirty clients perform in the Kremlin basement, there is no romance. You worked for the day, and you go home tired in the tram among the same tired people during the day. And if more than a hundred, it's in nature. Forest. River. Evening by the fire. After execution - one hundred grams. These grams are perceived as a medicine. Like a sour vitamin after an injection. One hundred grams is not enough. The soul asks for more. Therefore, in the evenings after the executions, everyone gets his own. Everything is on the common table. On such

evenings, titles are not recognized. All -
their. All friends. All are singers.

What brings people together the most? Collaboration. The more difficult the work, the more responsible it is, the stronger the friendship between those who carry it out.

The fire is blazing, it is bursting with heat, sparks in a round dance into the sky, stew in jars, smoked sausage - you can't cut it. Uncle Vasya, a knitter, rolls baked potatoes from the fire with a stick.

And the vodka is bitter.

Chapter 18

1

- Don't you think. Dragon what now, summer thirty eighth, the purge has culminated, and is it time to wrap it up? -

Comrade Stalin knows better.

- Don't you think that Comrade Stalin has already slipped through the critical point, and if the NKVD tries to take power, Comrade Stalin will simply have no one to rely on? - You're overtired. -

You can say what you want, but once I was sitting in a monastery and looking at the phone...

- It's terribly interesting. - I was looking at the phone, and the idea came to my mind that the easiest way to carry out a coup d'etat is to turn off Comrade Stalin's phones. Without communication there is no control, without control there is no power. Disconnecting a person from communication systems means

disconnect from power.

"It's not easy to disable communication systems. - It's not easy right now. Now there is one capital and all communication lines converge to Moscow, but soon there will be a spare underground capital in Zhiguli. One leader for two capitals. Tell me, Dragon, did Comrade Stalin provide for some kind of safety mechanism to prevent the conspirators from using one of the capitals in his absence? I don't answer such

questions. - Then I will ask Comrade Stalin this question. - Eh, girl, you are taking a risk ... Comrade Stalin has been holding the post of General Secretary for sixteen years. For all these years no one asked him questions.

2

In Moscow - sticky closeness. There is nothing to breathe in Moscow. Moscow is waiting thunderstorms. Moscow yearns for cleansing.

Unusual scorching heat spread over Moscow, penetrated into all the nooks and crannies, burned out stunted trees. The people of Moscow trampled down the grass. Dust in the face.

And the office of the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, General Commissar of State Security Nikolai Ivanovich Yezhov has no access to heat. Old trick: from early morning, even before sunrise, it is necessary to close all windows with thick heavy curtains. And not only in the office, but in all the corridors. The heat does not penetrate through the thickness of the walls - it penetrates through the windows. The heat heats up everything inside. But it is worth hanging the windows tightly ... That is why in all hot countries the windows are closed with lattice shutters - in order not to let the direct rays of the sun inside.

That's the whole secret. Same with trains. Nikolai Ivanovich had a chance to travel around Russia. The same recipe: if in a hot time the curtains are closed in the whole car from the very morning and the car is kept in twilight all day, then it will not heat up inside. And it stays cold.

They say that in America they came up with a car to put in the window. Ice is stuffed inside that machine, a fan works and drives hot air through the ice, the air cools and a cold jet enters the room. The ice in the car melts, and the water is discharged through a tube into the sewer. As soon as all the ice has melted, you need to charge a new portion, and turn on the fans again. It would be necessary to order such a car in America. And now while the curtains save. They are closed. Only in the corners, where the curtains do not adhere tightly to the walls, light dawns a little. Nikolai Ivanovich Yezhov walked along the table. Nikolai Ivanovich's table is of such a size that it takes three minutes to move from one edge to the other. And three minutes ago. I went there past a five-

meter portrait. Went back past the same portrait. In the portrait - a man in boots, in a soldier's open

overcoats, in a green cap.

- Comrade Stalin. She intends to ask a question. —

Comrade Holovanov, I hold the post of General Secretary

It's been sixteen years now and no one has asked me questions in all these years.

"She knows it, Comrade Stalin. - And
yet? .. - And yet ... -

Call.

4

People's Commissar for Communications of the USSR, Commissar of State Security of the first rank Matvey Berman energetically saluted the sergeants of state security. The sergeants, having opened the doors in front of him, threw up their rifles in the "On Guard" position. There is a deep meaning in that greeting: we have weapons in our hands, but we do not interfere with you, dear and beloved commissioner of state security of the first rank, we do not block your path, our rifles are directed to the sky with bayonets, like barriers raised at your approach. Comrade Berman smiled at the state security sergeants. And the sergeants smiled. On the face of one sergeant, a silent question: "When

you were the head of the Gulag, I guarded you during a trip to the Raichikha camps. Do you remember me, Comrade Berman?" On the face of another: "When the Moscow-Volga Canal was solemnly opened, I was disguised as a reforged thief and, on behalf of the reforged, brought you flowers. Do you remember me, Comrade Berman?" Comrade Berman smiles: "I remember everything!" Happy sergeants. Comrade Berman left the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs for the People's Commissariat for Communications, but even outwardly remained loyal to the authorities. Comrade

Berman left for the People's Commissariat of

Communications, but he walks in the uniform of a Chekist, wears four rhombuses of the state security commissioner of the first rank in his buttonholes. And the former place of work does not forget.

It's nice for the sergeants: Comrade Berman left for a promotion, but it seems he didn't leave. He didn't go anywhere. Just the Commissariat of Communications under it

leadership even more tightly fastened to the NKVD and became an inseparable part of a huge powerful mechanism. Comrade Berman is a frequent guest here. And he is not a guest at all. This is his home, and he never left. He is ours. There is something for

the People's Commissar of Communications, Comrade Berman, to talk to the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, Comrade Yezhov. It is clear. And yet the sergeants at the door feel that this visit is somehow solemnly unusual. Soon. Something will happen very soon. Great and joyful.

5

- Comrade Stalin, the situation when a second capital is created in one state seems to me dangerous. - Comrade

Streletskaya, you want to say: one leader for two capitals? - That's what I want to

say, Comrade Stalin. "And you want to ask me a question, did I provide a security system that would not allow the conspirators to use the nodes and communication systems of the secret capital during my absence?" "That is the question I wanted to ask. - Comrade Streletskaya, I provided such a

safety device. It's called Control Block. -

Thank you, Comrade Stalin, I didn't know only the name of this thing, I know everything else. - What do you

know? - The "control block" was ordered in America, from the RVB company, this is in Baltimore, Maryland. It weighs from fifteen

to twenty-five kilograms, the main material is gold and steel. In terms of complexity, it equals or exceeds the best cipher machines in the world.

Stalin looked out the window for a long time. Then somehow cautiously approached Nastya and sat down next to him. Hands on the table, on the green tablecloth. His gaze was unblinking, straight into her eyes. Nastya is scared, but she held her gaze.

- Comrade Streletskaia, only I knew what you just said. And yet - Holovanov. I didn't tell you any details about the Control Block. I am sure that Holovanov did not tell you this either.

- Holovanov did not tell me this. I demanded a meeting with you, Comrade Stalin, precisely because Kholovanov refused to discuss this problem. - In this case, how, Comrade Streletskaia,

do you know the details? - I figured them out, Comrade Stalin. - I, Comrade Streletskaia,

would like to receive a more detailed

answer.

- Comrade Stalin, forgive me, but I mentally put myself
to your place.

— Is that

how? - In case of a big liberation war, it is necessary to have a command post. The underground city in Zhiguli near Kuibyshev is the best choice. But having a main capital and an alternate capital, you need to have some sort of safety mechanism in place. If it is simple and small, then it will be easy to fake or replace it with something. If it is large and complex, then it will be impossible to constantly carry it with you in a critical situation. The optimal solution: something as complex as a cipher machine, but quite transportable, something the size of an ordinary briefcase or

briefcase...

— And how did you know that the "Control Block" is made mainly of gold and steel? — Gold is the

best material for the needs of electrical engineering. You have enough of this material. But the unique device, made with jeweler's precision from soft gold, must have a solid frame. I assumed it would be steel. Something like two steel plates, between which a golden

filling.

"And RVB in Baltimore?" - I assumed

that such a thing was designed by imprisoned engineers in our monastery or foreign engineers - also in our monastery. But the production base of the monastery does not allow the manufacture of the "Control-block". None

a domestic plant cannot be entrusted with such a thing. Such an unusual order will immediately become known to the NKVD. I assumed that the "Control-block" should be secretly ordered abroad so that the manufacturer did not know the purpose of this unit. It is better to order such a thing from a very reliable, but small company. I collected information about all foreign manufacturers who could fulfill such an order. There were few such firms all over the world - only seven. One in Japan, four in Western Europe, two in the United States. It is logical to assume that the order will be placed personally by Holovanov. It remains to calculate its routes. It is very difficult for someone from the outside to keep track of Holovanov, but I worked side by side with him and believed that control should extend to him as well. Over the past year, he has never been to Japan or Western Europe, but three times to America. Of the two American firms, one is located on the West Coast, in Seattle. Holovanov had never been to the West Coast. Another firm, namely RVB, is located on the East Coast, in Baltimore. I don't have exact information about where he was and what he did, but ... I compared the facts ... Stalin picked up the phone: - Kholovanova to me.

6

People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, General Commissar of State Security, Nikolai Ivanovich Yezhov, needs to get back to business. It's difficult. Nikolai Ivanovich sat down at the table and opened a red folder. Such clear numbers in front of him. It's so easy to draw conclusions. The Chekists drove the army under the yoke. The higher the position of the commander, the more likely it is to get hit by an axe. And the Chekists are exterminating the Communist Party at an accelerated pace. By order of Stalin-Gutalin. The

statistics are fascinating. The Great Purge is directed against everyone. But the higher the position of a person, the more opportunities to thunder under the tram of proletarian justice. An ordinary Soviet person over the past two years had the opportunity to fall under the punishing sword of the NKVD with a probability of 5%. Petty non-partisan

chief - 7%. Party member - 44%, member of the Central Committee of the Party - 78%. If this dependence is continued and transferred to the highest level of power, to a person in an open soldier's overcoat, in boots and a green cap, then according to statistics it turns out that he will become a victim of the NKVD with a probability of 100%. That's what the statistics say. You just need to know how to use it. Yes, and how else? With the hands of the NKVD, the General Secretary of the Party, Comrade Gotalin, destroys his party. Destroy the party, and remain the General Secretary without a party. On whom should he rely? Only in the NKVD. But will the NKVD allow itself to be relied upon?

And Comrade Gotalin should not rely on the People's Commissariat for Communications. Is it possible to rely on the army? In the army, everyone is afraid of Yezhov. On the government, on officials, on state structures? Ezhov keeps everyone in an iron fist. Comrade Gotalin went overboard. Comrade Gotalin is a naked king.

Work is not going on. Pushed the General Commissioner of State Security aside reports and charts. I looked at myself in the mirror. Nice shape on it. Stars on the buttonholes, like a marshal. Why not have two titles: General Commissar of State Security Marshal of the Soviet Union N. I. Yezhov? It's time to get into the role. Picked up the phone

What code does the Red Army live by now? - Comrade General Commissar of State Security, the Red Army, like the entire Soviet people, lives according to the Criminal Code of 1929 - UK-29. - What, they are fighting under the

Criminal Code? The receiver froze for a couple of moments: "Comrade General Commissar of State Security, we have military men sitting in our cells. Allow me to consult and report? "Very well," the General Commissar agreed

magnanimously. The phone rang four minutes later: - Comrade General Commissar of State Security,

The Red Army lives according to the Field Manual of 1936 - PU-36.
"I need one copy immediately.

- Comrade Streletskaia, could you tell me everything you told me, repeat to Comrade Holovanov?

"Of course I could. But I want to tell you something completely different. Comrade Stalin does not like those who act contrary to his instructions. But Stalin smiled. And do not understand: he smiled good-naturedly or menacingly. He smiled with an enigmatic smile.

Well, tell us something completely different. -

Comrade Stalin, much of what we eavesdrop on, we cannot decipher simply because the Chekists, in conversations among themselves, call people not by their real names, but by their alone

famous nicknames.

- What nicknames? -

Well, for example, they often talk about some Gutalin. - I know Gutalin. They are about me. Nastya was embarrassed:

- And they also talk about Kluksik, about Sigismund, about Karla, Lufik, Ganik, about Pest, Durik, you can't list them all. The composition of the Chekists is constantly updated. Those who get liquidated in our monastery are given nicknames during interrogations. But those who remain at large quickly invent new nicknames, and again we listen and do not understand.

- What are you offering?

- I propose to subject information about KGB meetings to statistical processing. - Is that how?

"Exactly

so, Comrade Stalin. We often do not understand who they are talking about, or misunderstand, but no one prevents us from analyzing the duration of meetings. Official and unofficial. If conversations are incomprehensible, then it is necessary to analyze not their meaning, but statistical parameters. All the leaders of the NKVD from the republics, from the territories and regions from time to time appear in Moscow on official business. We have enough information about their arrival in Moscow and their departure. The hotels in which they stay, the restaurants they visit are known, there is enough information about their visits to the dachas and apartments of their Moscow friends. There is a whole river of information. There are records of table conversations. I

decided to draw up schedules of visits by the highest Chekists from the provinces to Comrade Yezhov's personal apartments and dachas.

Comrade Stalin said nothing, only his chair to the table moved. Closer to the charts.

- For example, comrade Lavrushin from Gorky was in Moscow eighteen times in ten months. On sixteen occasions I visited Comrade Yezhov's apartments and dachas. The total time spent in the official institutions of the NKVD was 21 hours and 10 minutes. In Yezhov's private homes and dachas - 69 hours 13 minutes. In the apartments and dachas of other senior employees of the NKVD - 12 hours 43 minutes. - Tell

me how interesting. And are there records?

- Eat. But the records are nothing special. They understand that in dachas and apartments we can eavesdrop on them. But statistics are more interesting than talk. Here Comrade Litvin from Leningrad visited Yezhov's apartments and dachas. Everything is collected here. Here is Comrade Nasedkin

from Belarus. - And who stayed at Yezhov's most of all?

- Uspensky from Kyiv.

"Interesting," said Comrade Stalin. He walked across the room and repeated: "Interesting." -

Comrade Stalin, we listen and analyze empty conversations all the time, but no one thought of doing statistics. On the graphs, I clearly depicted the entire dynamics of visits to Yezhov's apartments and dachas and highlighted the twenty leading visitors.

Leave everything here, I'll take a

look. "That's not all, Comrade Stalin. I decided to assess the situation from the other side. It is interesting to know who most often visits Yezhov's house, but I decided to identify those leaders of the regional NKVD bodies who had never been to Yezhov's house. Comrade

Stalin looked at Kholovanov and said nothing. But Kholovanov does not need to say anything. Kholovanov reads by sight. There cannot be two values. The Stalinist look said: "Wow! This girl will go far." Kholovanov - to Stalin with a look: "So it's

you, Comrade Stalin, you sent her to control."

Nastya does not see these views. She unrolls charts.

- It turned out, Comrade Stalin, an incomprehensible picture. Comrade Yezhov is a great hospitable. Loves company. Likes drinking parties. For less than two years, all the heads of the republican and regional departments of the NKVD visited his house. Everyone whom Yezhov did not like in the NKVD, he shot. All who remain are his friends, his henchmen, his drinking companions. In many regions and republics, in less than two years, Yezhov replaced two or three heads of the NKVD. He shoots the old, appoints new ones, invites them to his house, treats them, gives them water, feeds them, then dismisses them, shoots them, appoints new ones, invites them to his place, treats them. There is only one

exception ... Stalin pressed his fingers into the table so that the nails turned white. - The only exception: not in any of Yezhov's apartments, not one of Yezhov's dachas has never been the head of Kuibyshevsky ...

- Bocharov.

- That's right, Comrade Stalin. Head of the Kuibyshev Directorate of the NKVD Senior Major of State Security Bocharov. I'll say more. The analysis shows that Yezhov and Bocharov never found themselves together in the same restaurant, in the same theater, in the same sanatorium, in the same train. They meet only in Yezhov's office. In a year and a half, Yezhov shot thirteen thousand, two hundred and forty career Chekists. If Yezhov doesn't like Bocharov, then why didn't he shoot him? If Yezhov does not love Bocharov, then why does he keep him in such a responsible position? Stalin and Holovanov

exchanged glances again. - And how can you, comrade Streletskaya, explain this? - Comrade Stalin, this is an inexplicable riddle. - You are afraid to call a spade a spade! - Stalin's point of view

suddenly became

violent. - Afraid. I'm afraid because I only have one fact in my hands. From one fact I do not want to draw conclusions. Maybe these are all coincidences. - There

are no coincidences in the NKVD. - If so, then the conclusion is simple: between Yezhov and Bocharov is a secret known only to them. They decided to show that only official relations exist between them, and outplayed. Everything would have gone unnoticed, but statistics show that such

there is no official relationship between Yezhov and his subordinates.

- Can you express your idea in a shorter way? -
CONSPIRACY.

Chapter 19

1

It happens like this: no one expresses an idea, but it is in the air. Such a good idea that it comes to everyone's mind. And everyone smiles, thinking about his own. And everyone sees a smile on the lips of his neighbor. And he understands that his neighbor is excited by the same thought, smiles at

the same thought. And the idea is simple: The Communist Party is committing suicide. The Party has allowed itself to be exterminated. The fire went through the bottoms slightly, but the tops burned out almost completely. And the Red Army is on its knees. The Communist Party is choking on its own blood. And who is left?

Remained Chekists. The only strength. Comrade Stalin is a respected comrade, but he is the General Secretary of the Communist Party. And there is no Communist Party. There is no power behind Stalin.

And the NKVD... And the state security sergeant smiles at something of his own. Secret. And another sergeant. The same sentry at the same huge multi-ton door smiles.

And the head of the Kuibyshev department of the NKVD, senior major of state security, comrade Bocharov, smiles. To myself. He is alone in the underground corridor. In the corridor of power. Above it is one hundred and thirty meters of monolithic rock. On the left bank of the Volga in Kuibyshev, Stalin's secret command post is being secretly erected. And here, in the horseshoe-shaped bend of the Volga, in the Zhiguli, there will be a secret capital of Europe and Asia. The only question

is: who will rule in this capital? Stalin-Gutalin is digging his own grave. Gutalin will soon exterminate his Communist Party and will be left alone. There are three candidates for rulers after Stalin-Gutalin: comrades Yezhov, his first deputy Frinovsky, the former head of the Gulag, and now the People's Commissar of Communications Berman. Triumvirate. A

Bocharov. Three in Moscow will take power and overall leadership, but the communication systems in the unfinished underground city are controlled by Bocharov. They are there, in Moscow, theorists, and he gathered experts in government communications from all over the Gulag. And the experts suggested: one leader cannot leave two capitals unattended. Stalin is pulling the communication lines to the Zhiguli, which means he must order some kind of safety mechanism with which these systems are unlocked and locked.

Bocharov showed the experts the Zhiguli tunnels stuffed with communication equipment, the experts looked and pointed out: this is the very place in the armor plate. Here Stalin will insert an electrical device that is not inferior in complexity to the best encryption machines, and in shape will resemble a large book. Here is a gap in the armor plate - this very unit was inserted into it, and all the country's communication systems were under its control. He pulled out - and no one but him, an underground city in Zhiguli to rule the country cannot use.

It remains only for Bocharov to figure out to whom and where Gutalin ordered this very thing. Of course, such a thing is not ordered in our country. Gutalin has trusted people: Poskrebyshev, secretary, Vlasik, head of security. But Gutalin did not let them out of the country and will never let them out. Only one person can order such a thing in another country -

Kholovanov. It remains to follow Holovanov. It's not easy. Holovanov will dive in and out. It spins near Gutalin, then disappears without a trace. But Holovanov has a weakness. Comrade Holovanov is weak on girls. Very weak. Girls know when and where he appears.

A lot of gold nuggets were given by the senior major of state security Bocharov for unraveling the amorous stories of Holovanov. A lot of senior major of state security gave away diamonds. Not in vain. The girls reported: how, where, when. Bocharov put together a mosaic from small pieces. Everything in our life comes down to perseverance. Everything is available to us. If perseverance is shown. The senior major of state security Bocharov showed persistence, which he himself did not expect. Days and nights, arrests, interrogations, party conferences, even the chiefs of Moscow must be appeased, and again interrogations, executions and party meetings, and Bocharov every

he saves a minute for the main thing: from pieces, from fragments, from fragments, he puts together a picture of Holovanov's trips. Not everything Bocharov managed to find out, but a lot.

2

The sun heated the granites of Ivanovskaya Square so that the horseshoes on the boots of the guards melted. Bronze drops will flow from captured bonopart guns. Destroyed the security. The sentries chimed in. The bayonets seem soft.

There is no escape from the heat. The sticky heat also seeped into Stalin's

office. - If I understand correctly, Comrade Streletskaya, in the entire leadership of the NKVD there is only one person with whom Yezhov officially meets, but not unofficially.

"Exactly so, Comrade Stalin. This is Bocharov.

"But what if we now check Bocharov's connections and find out if Bocharov avoids unofficial contacts with anyone else from the top leadership of the NKVD, besides Yezhov?" - Comrade

Stalin, I checked it. - Is that how? -

The head

of the Kuibyshev department of the NKVD, senior major of state security Bocharov, except for Yezhov, never met in an informal setting with the deputy people's commissar of the NKVD Frinovsky and the people's commissar of communications Berman. He simply avoids them, just like they avoid him. - Comrade Holovanov, if

our Firebird could simply calculate the fact of the existence of the "Control-block", its purpose, approximate type and weight, and even the manufacturer, then it is quite possible that the comrades in the NKVD were able to calculate this. They make it easier. It is under their leadership that they cut tunnels in the Zhiguli rocks, it is under their control that communication lines are pulled to the Zhiguli, it is they who monitor the installation of equipment and equipment. It is quite easy for them to guess that I did not put everything into their hands, but provided for a safety mechanism. If they think about it, then they can think of everything else. I, like Hercules, clean the Augean stables in full

confidence that no one will interfere with me. I have not yet paid much attention to the Zhiguli - the underground city is just being built, and I have the key to its nodes and communication systems. But it turns out that the construction of the first stage will be completed ahead of schedule, and the key to its nodes and communication systems may be in the hands of the NKVD. What do you propose to do, comrade Kholovanov? - Immediately arrest

Yezhov, Frinovsky, Berman, Bocharov. - No, Comrade Holovanov. We cannot do this. We can't just because they have more power. All the most important objects in the country, starting with the Kremlin, are under the protection of the NKVD, that is, under the control of Yezhov. The People's Commissariat of Communications under the control of Berman. Border troops under the control of Frinovsky. The underground city in Zhiguli is being built by the hands of prisoners, that is, under the control of the NKVD. If the comrades from the NKVD also stole the Control Block, then going into an open fight against them is the same as going out alone against Genghis Khan with his entire horde. - If Yezhov, Frinovsky, Berman and Bocharov are

not arrested, then they will take power. What remains, Comrade Stalin? - Comrade Streletskaya, who is Yezhov's main enemy in the NKVD system? - Comrade Stalin, Yezhov's main enemy is an old Chekist, however, now he is not formally a Chekist. In the last seven years, since November 1, 1931, he has been in leading party work ...

- Beria! -

That's right, the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party Georgia Lavrenty Pavlovich Beria. Stalin picked up the phone: - Give

Yezhov. Comrade Yezhov, there are eleven republics in the Soviet Union. In nine republics, you and I exposed the leaders and shot them. There are two left: Comrade Khrushchev in Ukraine, this is a very good comrade, and Beria in Georgia. My comrades and I consulted here, but we cannot make a final decision: should Beria be shot or not? What do you think about it? - Shoot - without wasting precious moments on

thoughts, the receiver answered.

- And why, Comrade Yezhov? Do you have material on Comrade Beria?

"I have material for everyone. -
And on me?

- Hm. No, of course, Comrade Stalin. You don't. I expressed myself incorrectly. I have on everyone but you. -

That's good, Comrade Yezhov. Urgently send me by courier copies of the materials on this scoundrel Beria and your thoughts on the arrest. Goodbye, Comrade Yezhov. Stalin

hung up. - Comrade

Kholovanov, it is necessary, without using telephones and other technical means of communication, to urgently and secretly summon Comrade Beria

from Tbilisi to Moscow. - "Stalin's route" is too noticeable. Glavspetsremstroy, if it violates traffic schedules, can reach Tbilisi and return in a little over a

day. - It won't. Comrade Beria is a good comrade, but I have no intention of showing him my repair train system. This is my secret, comrade Kholovanov, and I ask you to

keep it. Kholovanov drew himself up. He understands that he has already piled up so many mistakes that it is time to substitute the back of the head under the gun. But Comrade Stalin has no time now to shoot Kholovanov, and there is no

possibility. Dear every person. - Let's do it, Comrade Kholovanov. You send one of the special couriers to Tbilisi, let him inform Comrade Beria personally that he must urgently and quietly arrive

in Moscow. - Firebird. - No, Comrade Kholovanov. Again no. I have a more important task

for the Firebird. "We have enough special couriers in the monastery, Comrade Stalin. "Here, send one. Imperceptibly. Change clothes. Let someone pretend. And you yourself, comrade Kholovanov, pick up your team and go to America. Whatever stage of readiness the Control Block is in, it should be picked up and delivered to me. If the "Control Unit" is stolen... - It can't be.

"Anything is possible, Comrade Kholovanov. If the "Control Block" is stolen, inform me by telegram. Text: "No. The Dragon". All. Go.

Holovanov left. -

Comrade Streletskaya, when I was in exile in the Turukhansk region, I had a good motto: do not be cold. Do you know, Comrade Streletskaya, what this word means?

"I know, Comrade Stalin.

Stalin stopped. He stood in silence for a long time, trying to understand

what he heard. "You know that too, Comrade Streletskaya. That's good, - he went to the end of the office. Has stopped. He stood. He returned to his original place, stopped, lit his pipe and continued: - We are on the edge. It's very easy to push us. Communication systems and nodes are in their hands, the protection of the most important objects is in their hands, the "Control-block" can be in their hands. In the NKVD - a conspiracy. And everyone is afraid of them. We know only the pinnacle of the conspiracy. We do not know their forces and plans. But they have power. I cannot speak openly against Yezhov until I am sure that the "Control Block" is in my hands, or at least it has been neutralized. We do not know when they are preparing to move out, but let us hope that they will not dare to move out before the completion of the construction of the first stage of the command post in Zhiguli. The first stage should enter by the holiday, by November 7th. If so, then we still have time. If they are not arrested and shot, they will seize power, and if they are arrested and shot, they will be forced to seize power in self-defense. We will, Comrade Streletskaya, continue to arrest and shoot them. They have no way out and we have no way out. I'm sending you on a risky business. Maybe to death. You will go to Bocharov.

In what role would you like to go there? - In the usual role of a special courier of the Central Committee. I will need an official paper with many details so that the purpose of the visit is not immediately clear. I just get to the special stage of the Kuibyshev NKVD and have

reason to be there for several days. - I'll prepare the paper for you. I am not giving you any task. Act according to the situation. And let's not be cold, comrade Streletskaya. Go and know that we will stand. We'll wring their necks. Remember, I will always help you out. No matter what happens. You are now my man. Forever. I don't

leave mine alone. I save mine. Always. He turned to face the window and repeated

- Always.

3

America rejoices.

The Russians flew across the Pole to America. One super-powerful engine, a long predatory fuselage, incredible wingspan and three die-hard guys.

America rejoices. The rain of leaflets fills the streets. An open long Buick, entwined with garlands of flowers, solemnly floats through an enthusiastic crowd. It is not at all easy to fly over

the Pole. The plane was built for only one record flight. No structure can withstand such incredible loads again. Therefore, the red-winged handsome man will be taken apart and returned by steamer to Soviet Russia. Because the huge Soviet cargo ship "Maxim Gorky" is waiting in the port of Baltimore. A Soviet technical delegation arrived to meet the long-winged Soviet aircraft, which included the famous polar

pilot Kholovanov with a group of top-class professionals.

4

Stalin's secretary Comrade Poskrebyshev opened the door and reported:

- Comrade Stalin, Comrade Beria Lavrenty Pavlovich, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia, arrived at your order. - Call. Come in, Lavrenty, sit down, dear. How are things in Georgia? Hello, Comrade Stalin. There is a revolutionary order in Georgia. - That's what I thought, that the

revolutionary order in Georgia. We always have order in Georgia. Am I wrong? But Comrade Yezhov says that you have Georgia in complete disarray. He says that you yourself are a criminal. Says you're decomposed in the moral and domestic

relation. He says that you have a harem in Tbilisi, another one in Sukhumi, and another, small one, in Batumi. - Well, that one is quite small, Comrade Stalin. - Comrade Yezhov says that you are stealing money. - Who does not steal them, Comrade Stalin? "He says you kill people on a whim." He says you seduce minors. He says that in Kutaisi you hunt for schoolgirls in the evenings. He says you want to become a marshal and hang a diamond star around your neck. Look how many denunciations he sent to you. Here - about your sexual promiscuity and sexual perversion. It's about theft. Here - about your illegal palaces. Here - all your past is described. I don't even want to read these crap. Take it, dear, for yourself. And here, Lavrenty, Comrade Yezhov's proposal. This is exactly what he wants to do with you. Sent to me personally. Seal of the NKVD and his signature. He writes that shooting you is not enough. How do you like it?

5

"So it is, Russula. Here is a photo. This is Mr Stanton. He is the owner of Pharaoh & Sons, which recruits American engineers for the Soviet Union. In addition, through Mr. Stanton, we ordered one very important thing in Baltimore from the RVB company. There is a suspicion that this thing was taken away from him, to put it mildly. We need to talk to Mr. Stanton, but in such a way that no one finds out that we saw him. By the end of the working day, I put all the girls I brought with me to the exits of his company. We need to keep him out of the crowd. In addition, I will post posts at his house. We need to catch Mr. As soon as they intercept and lead you, I will throw you out in a car on his way. Your task is to fool, knock down the pantalik and lead astray. We will be watching you. As soon as you take him aside, we will grab him. It is necessary to explain. Clear? - Clear. I just can't speak American. "You don't

have to speak American." The main thing is that you do not speak Russian. You convey information to him by facial expressions. AND

gestures. Body, so to speak.

- Clear. What if he speaks? – And you listen and smile. - Clear.
- All.

Free until evening. By the evening you will dress enticingly and paint a muzzle. You get it. Go. Shirmanov to me.

6

- Comrade Yezhov, hello. This is what I say, Comrade Stalin. Hello, Comrade Stalin. "Comrade Yezhov, my comrades and I consulted here and decided that it was not enough to shoot Comrade Beria. -

Not enough, Comrade

Stalin. We won't shoot him. He needs to be reeducated and to correct. I hope the Lubyanka knows how to re-educate.

- Let's re-educate, Comrade Stalin! We're on the right track put.

- He's here with me. I will now assign security and send him directly to you in the

Lubyanka. - Lubyanka has been crying over this scoundrel for a long time. "You misunderstood me, Comrade Yezhov. We have decided to send Comrade Beria to you at Lubyanka, not in cells, but in offices. Comrade Beria has been appointed your deputy. You will be his boss and try to correct and re-educate your new subordinate.

7

Luska the Russula walks arm in arm with Mr Stanton. Mister Stanton Russula whispers obscenities in his ear. Lucy laughs.

Someone in gray came unstuck from the wall and his mouth was clamped. And Shirmanov is nearby. Pulled into the entrance. In Washington, the entrances to the key are closed. But Shirmanov is a professional. In his pocket, if you rummage around, there are keys to every entrance.

They pulled Mr. Stanton in such a way that it seemed that there had never been such a Mr. on the streets of Washington. Holovanov

flashlight in his eyes: - Hello, Mr. Stanton.

How are things with the product you know? "Excellent, Mr. Holovanov. - Finished?

- Full order.

Completed. - And when? - Just a week

ago. Relieved at

Holovanov. He smiled: - And it seems

that by the

end of the year they

promised. - Exactly. Promised. But you

also promised to pay for the speed

additionally. Therefore, we tried our best and completed ahead of schedule.

- And where is the product at the moment?

- As where? How is it

where? - And you do not boil! Where, I ask, is the

product? - So they gave

it to you! - When

did you give it away? - So yesterday. The girl was from you. Skinny like that.

Pretty. And did

she have a cane? - There

was no cane, women do not walk with a cane. But in the bag

her head from a cane was. - Is it the

right one? - Exactly

like that. - Did

you check the documents? - How

without documents, Mr. Holovanov? All documents in

in perfect order. And the receipt is in my safe. On your letterhead.

The dragon gestures to Shirmanov to leave. They left. We lit up.

The dragon took a puff, spat and cursed for a long time, pouring out his soul.

- Taken away!!! Taken away "Control-block"! How the hell did they track me down?

At stake is my life, and yours, and that of Comrade Stalin. They stole the ace of trumps

from our deck. Without it, death. Well, at least the Firebird caught on in time. You know,

Shirmanov, it's even easier somehow. Perhaps this is how those sentenced to death

feel. The verdict was announced, and everything is indifferent at once. We burned down

you, Shirmanov. All power, all control is now in the hands of Yezhov Nikolai Ivanovich. He won't forgive me, and neither will you. We will hang on one torture machine. - I love the company. - Let's

not cry. Let's get back to business. There is only one solution for this situation: do not show Yezhov that we have caught ourselves. Therefore, we cannot kill Stanton: this will be a signal to Yezhov that we suspected something was wrong and joined the fight. But we can't leave Mr. Stanton alive. After all, he will be asked at any moment: was Kholovanov interested in the product? What can he answer? He will answer that Holovanov was interested. In this situation, Yezhov will have to act immediately, and he clearly has more strength. What are we to do if Stanton cannot be killed or left alive? The abyss Mr. Stanton also cannot: this is the same signal to Yezhov.

- You can't think of anything here. - No, Shirmanov, you can think of something. It's a pity that Washington, unlike European capitals, is empty immediately after the end of the working day. But nothing. In general, this: Mr. Stanton must die himself. Die today. Natural death. In front of dozens of witnesses. "Dragon,

it's already evening." To die of natural causes today in Washington in front of dozens of witnesses is only at the train station. Impossible.

- Shirmanov!
- I.
- Get busy.

Chapter 20

1

Kindness and animals

remember. Streletskaya Anastasia Andreevna is a loyal guardian of Stalinist power. If you figure it out - a ferocious lynx. But even without trial it is clear: a bloodhound, sniffing out treason, ready to tear anyone who the Boss

points to. But even in her callous soul the sparks of gratitude did not go out. Sevastyan taught him the rare ability to smoke safes, for which Nastya feeds him from time to time. And he gets drunk. Although it would be possible to express gratitude in words and calm down on that.

The process of illegal feeding (and soldering) of prisoners in certain circles is called the term "warm up the zone." Nastya does not heat the zone, but only one cell, in which Sevastyan and three other inhabitants are imprisoned. But how to convey to Sevastyan? There are no problems. Sevastyan is a teacher. Sevastyan teaches the soldiers of Stalin's personal secret army the ability to open safes. For this, a training point was created with dozens of various safes. Nastya hones her skills at this point, improves her skills. In the safe, which does not stand out from all the others in size or color, he leaves cucumbers, tomatoes, smoked sausage circles, heating pads with alcohol or other invigorating liquids. Sevastyan comes to conduct a lesson, sets the next dunce a task, and while he, swearing and biting his nails, is fiddling with an unyielding lock, the teacher at another safe, hiding behind the door, takes a couple of long sips of Kremlin standard cognac, chews on a slice of lemon and the lesson continues, over the next laughing foolishly. Clever people grow up in Georgia, in the valley of

the Alazani River, bushes with miraculous leaves: you chew, and breathe on any fool after drinking, without fear of exposure. Sevastyan suggested where, from whom to get such leaves, Nastya got it, put it in a safe with a margin for many months - drink, but understand the matter.

Not only Sevastyan himself secretly feeds himself, but he doesn't forget his neighbors either - katala, that is, a sharpie, sticky and plucking. They have training points nearby. So

they get through. Today Nastya loaded the safe, locked it, and here is Sevastyan with a student. Passed by, it seems like they did not know each other. Then

he suddenly turned around: "Whoa, girl, are you gloomy today?" Nastya sighed

heavily, without answering. Sevastyan to the new student briefly: scat! Like, I have things much more important

than mediocrity to teach. Nastya figured: can Sevastyan be entrusted with her secret? You can, of course, not trust. You can act on your own. And break wood. And then Yezhov Nikolai Ivanovich and his comrades will crush the country. And what's the use of keeping a secret? If you tell him, then maybe he will tell you something sensible. And taking the secret out of these walls will not work for Sevastyan. He will never get out of here. And there is no need for him to blurt out such secrets to anyone. That's why I decided: you can trust.

- Sevastyan Ivanovich, as far as I understand, you love those who have cold heads and clean hands, but not very much.

Sevastyan crunched a cucumber, confirmed:

- I love, but not very much. Can you help me roll out the ball? - Why not help.

Nastya unfolded the scheme of the special stage of the Kuibyshev NKVD

department: - Here's the thing. In this place, the guys who have cold heads and warm hearts are up to something. I'm sure it's a conspiracy. I'm going to them. I have access. It's impossible to get out of there unless they let you out. But this is not the main thing. How to find out what they decided there, what they are going to

do? That is the question. Sevastyan carefully examined the

scheme: - Look for the barbut. - Barbut? Ah, well, yes, that's right, you need to look for a barbut. I didn't think of it myself. And what is it

- barbut? - Barbut is a katran. - Katran ... Katran is such a Pacific shark.

- Katran is a secret den. The conspiracy begins in a homely, confidential atmosphere. Where is it? Not in the office. Not in an apartment. Because the Chekists' apartments are tapped, they know it. Where then? Somewhere in a cozy house. If a big deal is planned, then they must secretly gather. And not once. If you need to talk to your people about something illegal, where do they do it? A short conversation is in the forest. Forests on the special stage are in abundance. Well, if the conversation with booze all night, then where? But a conspiracy is not born just like that in the forest, and it does not mature in the forest. The conspiracy begins with the trust of the participants in each other. They gather in the den. On the katran. – Katran on the special stage? – Where else? Only there. "They can't have a secret hideout there. There they have a rest house on the special stage. They have

wives and children there. There
they and the leaders of the region
often rest. How can they go all night partying? Wives won't let go.

- There should be such a place so that the wives of the authorities do not find out about their gatherings, about their secret meetings and conversations. So that the guards did not know. To make it easy to come up with an excuse, tell the wives: we are conducting interrogations all night, and we ourselves are in a katran! And during the day they sleep off, like after nightly interrogations. During the interrogation, they supposedly drank vodka, because the

workload is heavy. - The houses there are all summer, they will start having fun - the whole district will hear ... - I

myself see that there is nowhere to establish a katran. But you still listen to what I tell you. And find a katran!

2

Kholovanov whispered something to Shirmanov, let him go, waited ten minutes and returned to the dark entrance where the two Grays were holding Stanton.

- You let me down a lot. I told you: do not give the product to anyone. I will personally follow him. Stanton lowered his eyes
and silently agreed.

– What to do with you? I won't kill you. Go. Yes, do not wander along the dark streets. Stay where the light is. Stay where there are a lot of people. Where is the police. Where no one will lay a finger on you.

And slightly pushed: why are you standing? Run if they let you. Stanton looked around incredulously, took a timid step, hesitantly at first, then ran faster and faster. In front of him is an empty wide avenue. The streets of Washington in the late evenings are completely empty. This is not New York, which never sleeps. The avenue is illuminated, but this does not make it any easier - the emptiness is frightening. It's better to hide in the dark.

Stanton dived into the first alley. But out of the darkness someone met him with a drawn-out wolf howl.

He rushed back to the avenue, ran a quarter, tried again. But this time, too, a warning howl greeted him from the darkness: don't come in here. He didn't try to turn anymore: along the avenue - forward, forward, forward. And here is a huge station

square and a grandiose station. This is salvation. The gigantic hall is flooded with light. There are very few late passengers. But there are not enough police. The guards are on guard. Everyone is girded with a belt, and on each belt is a whole arsenal: a holster with a revolver, steel handcuffs, a rubber club, something else. Who here dares to touch a US citizen? Stanton smiles at the muzzy guards, squints happily at the blinding light, trying to calm his shortness of breath. He'd better leave. Urgently. At least for a while. Go somewhere where no one can find him. Where is the cash room? Over there at the end. All the windows in the long row are closed. Only one has a very small queue. Stanton was attached last. And immediately Shirmanov's face appeared behind him: an unusual hat on the back of his head, a suit that did not fit. In the hands of an umbrella. Shirmanov twirled the umbrella in his hands, pointed it at Stanton's neck and pressed a button. Stanton, startled, struck his hand on the neck, trying to kill the wasp or bee that had bitten so painfully. In anger, he turned to the one behind him: didn't you prick? A citizen with a criminal face standing behind him spread his hands in complete bewilderment: is something wrong? Maybe something to serve? And flashed a golden grin: all the way, man! Other people queued up behind the citizen with an umbrella, and he, as if changing his mind, left the queue and slowly left,

dissolving into darkness.

Stanton handed the money through the cash register window, suddenly twitched in a wild spasm and sank down, grabbing the ledge with his hand, scratching the wall. nails.

3

Wheels knock at the joints, fly past the river, bridges, hillocks and groves, Glavspetsremstroy-12 carries the only passenger to where it will not be easy to return from. Sey Seich looked in: maybe a seagull? But no, she's not up to tea now. Who knows, maybe her train is carrying her on her last journey. Sey Seich moved a wide mirror wall. Usually there is Holovanov's wardrobe for all

occasions of a spy life. This time the collection is completely different: dresses, shoes, hats, coats with silver foxes. But she doesn't need that either. No need to dress up. The usual tunic of a special courier is quite enough for her. It's not the clothes that bother her. The question haunts, where is the hornet's nest on the special stage? I looked through all the schemes, but there is no cozy house where the conspirators could gather to discuss their plans so that their wives, guards, and servants would not pay attention to it. He is not here. There is a railway station, there is a corral, there are burials under young Christmas trees, there are burials under five-year-old Christmas trees, there are also under ten-year-old ones, there is a rest house. And there is no place where they could feast all night, fornicate and chat about anything. Absolutely no.

4

Ahead is the Volga. Ahead is a railway bridge: one end rests against the shore, the other against the horizon. Thirteen flights. It used to be called the Alexander Bridge. Now it's just a bridge. Few remember his former name. Few people remember that they began to build the Alexander Bridge in 1876, and four years later trains went over it. Then it was the longest bridge in Europe, a symbol of Russian capitalism, uncontrollably pushing towards the dawn. Bridge and now

impressive. Terrible bridge. Terrible gray Volga. Around - the steppe. It's already cold.

The wind whistles in the wires. Departure. Three track rails. On the slope there is an inscription in white pebbles: "Glory to Stalin!" On the siding - Glavspetsremstroy-12. All. Nothing more.

The red express train "Kuibyshev - Moscow" rushed past. People look out of the windows at the repair train, they can't see anything interesting. Because everything interesting is not outside, but inside. Inside the car is not the mail, not the luggage. There, inside, Sey Seich checks the readiness of the Firebird to carry out a responsible government task: the belt is tightly tightened, the pistol is in a holster, the briefcase with the document is fastened with a bracelet to the wrist of the left hand, a satchel is on the shoulder. A special courier does not need a lot of property. All his belongings fit in one bag. In a special pocket - a selection key, a set of professionally made master keys: maybe they will come in handy ...

"You can go from here on your own. Here Kuibyshev is within easy reach. The main thing is that they do not understand where you came from. We cannot keep any connection, Firebird. All telephones are in the hands of the NKVD, the entire telegraph is in the same hands. Go. If you learn or do something, come back here. We are at the junction here regularly on Saturdays from midnight to noon.

- This Seich, 913th kilometer right at the Zhiguli, do you think the comrades from the NKVD do not realize that we have a permanent place of stops and long stops here?

Let's hope they don't know about it. Nastya
unscrewed the Order of Lenin from her tunic, admired it for the last time and silently gave Seich: save it.

In the reception room of the head of the Kuibyshev regional department of the NKVD, a portly aunt with the face of Saltychikha sits at the table. Several people on chairs along the walls patiently wait in line for the reception.

But Nastya does not wait in line - she entered the reception room, threw her knapsack to the secretary's table, went to the door, presenting a silk pass with the seal of the Central Committee and the indelible signature of Stalin on

the way. - Special courier of the Central Committee

Streletskaya. Aunt rushed across, blocking the path with her powerful breasts: - Wait for

the call! Nastya, without looking at her aunt, without slowing down her pace, moved the well-fed woman out of her way with a movement of her hand. For the sake of politeness, after knocking a couple of times,

she resolutely opened the commanding door. There are three of them in the office - exactly those whom she expected to find here: Bocharov, head of the Kuibyshev department of the NKVD, Frinovsky, first deputy people's commissar of internal affairs, and Berman, people's

commissar of communications. -

Special courier of the Central Committee Streletskaya. - Hello, hello comrade Streletskaya. Meet: this is the former head of the Main Directorate of Camps, our native Gulag, and now Commissar of Communications Commissar of State Security of the third rank, Comrade Berman, and this is Comrade First Rank Army Commander Frinovsky, Comrade Yezhov's first deputy. - Hello comrades. - You are

welcome, comrade Streletskaya,

to the Kuibyshev department of the NKVD. What did you complain about? -

With paper. Nastya took out an envelope with

five wax seals

from her briefcase and handed it to Bocharov. Bocharov signed on the envelope, unfolded the double-folded sheet and, without reading it yet, glanced at the very bottom line: did Gutsin sign it himself?

No. Not by myself. Malenkov. Also, to be honest, not bad. What's in paper? Here's what: **Top**

**secret. Of particular importance. Senior Major
of State Security Bocharov**

personally.

***After reviewing the document, return it to the submitter for immediate
destruction. A special courier***

***of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks
Anastasia Streletskaya is sent to the Kuibyshev Directorate of the NKVD, in
subsequent documents - the Firebird. Purpose: to undergo training according to a special, v***

Main areas: improving the Spanish language, parachute training, orienteering and survival techniques, long walks, shooting, sambo. For the duration of his stay in the Kuibyshev NKVD, provide the Firebird with everything necessary for life and the successful development of the program. At her request, provide aircraft and parachutes for training jumps to any of the areas of her choice within the state borders of the USSR. Do not control or interfere with the preparation process. At the first request, provide the Firebird with communication with Moscow through closed government channels. You are personally responsible for the safety of the Firebird and keeping the secret of her stay in the Kuibyshev NKVD. Together with her, develop a plausible legend and strictly adhere to it. Except you, no one should know the true purpose of the business trip. I especially emphasize that the Firebird is only subordinate to the Central Committee. Do not ask questions to the Firebird. On

questions can only be answered by me.

Malenkov.

Moscow. Kremlin.

September 1, 1938.

The senior major of state security read such a paper, stared at Nastya: what kind of bird was sent? And for what? The muzzle is familiar from newspapers. She gave flowers to Stalin himself. Aby someone is not put on such a thing. Did Gutalin sniff out something? Or not? If I had sniffed it out, I would not have sent such a young one.

The senior major of state security smiled: - You are welcome, comrade

Streletskaya, to the Kuibyshev department of the NKVD. - Is there a fire? Bocharov took out a very expensive lighter. Nastya put

the tip of an almost transparent light sheet to the light. The leaf burned instantly, with a light, like a small explosion, cotton, leaving no

ashes.

- Comrade Streletskaya, wait in the rest room, now I will finish the work and personally take you to the special stage of the Kuibyshev Directorate of the NKVD.

Nastya left. Berman rushed to Bocharov. Why did you enter without waiting for permission? If there is so much impudence in her, then Gotalin sent her! – Yes, Gotalin sent her. - For what? Gotalin sniffed something out? I'm flying to Moscow right now. "Shlyuzdil, bastard?" Comrade Berman, People's Commissar for Communications of the USSR, turned out to be a hluzdoper! How did he, the poor man, rule the Gulag? He decided to return to Moscow. And I'll take it and I won't let it out!

- I am the People's Commissar of Communications of the USSR! - And I am a petty boss of the regional department of the NKVD. Only here, in my area, I am the prince of the specific. I want to - I will not let you out!
- Don't you dare! - I

can let go. For all four. Before you is a shining prospect to fall at the feet of Gotalin, to confess everything. And Gotalin will forgive you! And kisses ... Fuck you! He will listen to you, let us all into the first category, but then you too. Vali sack, dear little man. And so that you don't want to fall into Gotalin's legs, here's daddy for you, to refresh your memory. There are a lot of interesting things about you here. Having read it, you can burn it, it's okay: these are just copies, the real documents about your adventures are safely hidden with me. Put me down, put us down, and I'll put Gotalin on you with such material that you'll dream of being shot.

Bocharov yanked open the door of the unlocked safe, snatched out a green folder, and threw it in Berman's face. Scattered on the floor some documents, certificates, photographs. Berman rushed to collect all this, from time to time looking at the papers, then at the photographs, and every time he saw it as if he were shocked by what he saw: he thought that no one knew about it, but as it turned out.

Bocharov exploded, rushing around the office like an angry buffalo, not paying attention to Berman, who was scurrying around at his feet, raking up papers. - Do you think I decided on this business

without protecting myself from possible attempts by some comrades at the last moment to defect to the side of Gotalin? Tell everyone: they can immediately line up to lick Gotalin's ass, but let them remember

that I have for each daddy. All have feathered stigmas. So roll the sausage. We can manage without you, then you yourself will come running on the tsyrly. - I

didn't say anything bad. Yes, I don't even have in my thoughts ... -

Okay. Calm down. Vali to Moscow. Report to Comrade Yezhov that everything is on track. Everything is fine with us. Say that Gutalin sent a skinny girl to us at the special stage for no reason. Just don't panic. Since he sent a skinny girl, it means there is no one else. Let Comrade Yezhov with a faithful person urgently send everything that they have collected for that girl. And remember: Gutalin is nothing. He has no strength. He had one strength, one support - it was us, the NKVD! We don't want to obey - how can he pacify us? Nothing. There is nothing behind him but his name. Go.

7

The car stopped at the entrance to the NKVD headquarters. Bocharov respectfully (but not helpfully) opened the door and offered Frinovsky a seat next to the driver. Himself with Nastya - in the back seat.

Go.

Bocharov, as the owner, gives an explanation:

- The big house of the NKVD in the center of Kuibyshev is for everyone to see it. And to be afraid. Outside the city, on the special stage, we have a command post, a communication center, a rest house, warehouses, a training center, and a firing squad. Should it happen in the city - natural disasters, unrest, rebellion - the NKVD will not lose control. We can control the situation from the city center, or we can control it from the picturesque forest. From an impregnable fortified area. It's hard to get in, and even harder to get out. The principle is old: entry - one ruble, exit - two.

Chapter 21

1

There is a long road from the city center, from the regional department of the NKVD to the special stage. They jumped out of the city - and through the forest along the railway line, until they ran into the green gate. To the right - indestructible fences, braided with wire, to the left - indestructible fences, braided with the same wire. In front of the fence is a moat. So that the car does not break through the fence. In the moat, thorny bushes are wrapped around with barbed wire. In front of the gates are ominous inscriptions. Next to it is

another gate. The ones for the trains. The doors of the gate opened, letting Emka through, and closed. Mechanization. Like Comrade Stalin at a secret underground metro station. Again, forest. Again, a railway line nearby. The September sun has baked a pine forest, it smells of resin.

So the Volga flashed from behind the hillock. The space is boundless. They gave forest. On the other side are the slopes of the Zhiguli. On the Volga, a white steamer is calling someone

with its horns. The car turned. Ahead on the hill is a majestic temple. Abandoned a long time ago, the bell tower was pierced by shells back in the Civil War, all overgrown with thorny bushes. But the greatness is not gone. Ah, they knew how to build before. And they knew how to choose places for temples.

- To the right - the rest house of the NKVD and the dachas of the leadership. Near the Volga there is a boat station. To the left is a children's town. There used to be a homeless colony here. Now - a camp for Spanish children. And there is our railway station, the training center of the NKVD troops, a shooting range and a site where we shoot enemies. That's all our attractions.

Nastya listens to the story of the senior major of state security, but she herself knows all this. In the monastery, a whole folder of documents for the Kuibyshev special stage was collected. Everything is in that folder: the exact area of the site, and the length of the perimeter, and the security system. Well settled down. And the Volga is nearby. Outsiders can't get through

special stage and do not run away from it. Some of the gates are railway, others are nearby - automobile, and another gate with access to the beach and boat station. And twenty-seven kilometers of indestructible fences under constant supervision and protection. The senior major

of state security does not tell, but Nastya knows: there are anti-personnel mines in the ditches under the barbed wire. Between the fences - dogs-wolfhounds.

2

In the evening, the NKVD rest house is fun. Big handsome guy torments the harmonica. Laughter. Dancing. Bocharov, like a father:

- This is our new friend Nastya. Sent from the Center.

I command: love and favor. And don't ask questions!

And he walked away laughing. Nastya was surrounded by the wives of the leaders of the NKVD, they easily accepted into their circle.

3

Bocharov laughs, but he can't sleep. And Frinovsky too. Together they drank together and ate just as thoroughly. It's time to sleep, but will you fall asleep here? - What did she come up with? - It's OK.

Individual sabotage training. The paper, of course, has some kind of secret meaning: it is written in such a way so as not to understand what exactly Gutalin is up to. But she can be the most ordinary controller. Gutalin sent her to sniff out something. But it doesn't look like it. Someone more respectable would have been sent to control. "There is something

behind this. There's something wrong here. -

Yes, what's wrong? Decided, for example, General Franco's Gutalin to decide in Spain, so he sent the girl to get ready.

– Why exactly here? -

Because we have the most protected special stage in the entire Soviet Union.

"Don't you understand that a comedy with Spanish and skydiving - is it just for the sake of disguise?"

- Yes, I understand everything! But you also understand: Gotalin is on the edge. Previously, there were three forces under Gotalin: the Communist Party, the NKVD and the Red Army. Gotalin stood on three whales. Against each force he put forward two others. What could the NKVD do if both the party and the Red Army were against us? And the party and the NKVD kept the army on leashes-stretch marks. When Gotalin was cleaning his party, he relied on the NKVD and the army. He always had two others against one force. What now? He strangled the party leaders with our hands, and everyone in the party is afraid of us. He also rubbed the army with our hands. The commanders of the Red Army are intimidated. And Gotalin stayed with us alone. And he caught on. If we want to turn it off from communication systems, we will turn it off. Berman, Commissar of Communications, will turn off his phones in Moscow, and I will take control of all the country's communication systems from here, from the Zhiguli. By the holiday, by November 7, we will

disconnect Gotalin from power! - It seems to me that Gotalin could not build a secret sp the capital, without providing some kind of safety unit.

- I foresaw, but did not finish it. I have this unit! I have! I took him away in America, while Gotalin reveled in greatness. Now he has nothing but greatness. And he can only rely on us, if we wish to support him. And he can also rely on Holovan, who knows where, and even on a snotty girl. Understood! - But Gotalin has already figured out where the matter is heading. He already

caught on.

Let's say I figured it out. Let's say Gotalin sent a girl for control. And he couldn't think of anything better than parachutes and foreign languages. Yes, but we have nothing to fear. Look at her! What does her appearance say? He says that there is no one Gotalin can rely on anymore. On the muzzle it is written: fool. Only with ambition.

In the morning, Nastya dresses in dark clothes and goes into the forest. There are a lot of forests on the special stage. The Chekists chopped off a piece on the Volga bank, not

were ashamed. The special stage is like a secret reserve capital of the region. Comrade Stalin, in accordance with the same logic, is building a secret capital for the entire Soviet Union. At the same time - for the whole of Europe, and for the whole of Asia. Over there, in the Zhiguli. On the other side of the Volga. Trickster Comrade Stalin. Nearby launched the grandiose construction of the Kuibyshev hydroelectric power station, the largest in the world. On the one hand, the capital of Europe will need a lot of energy. On the other hand, the construction of a hydroelectric power station serves, among other things, as a disguise for the construction of an underground city. Everyone knows that the great construction around is the Kuibyshev hydroelectric power station. There are so many camps around that in Kuibyshev the nights are as white as in Leningrad. There are so many forbidden zones here, so much electricity is burned in those zones that at night the whole area is illuminated with diffused light. At least read the newspaper.

So: they drive convicts in trains to Kuibyshev, and everyone understands - to build a hydroelectric power station. Unload machines and mechanisms - for the construction of hydroelectric power stations. Thousands of tons of steel and cement are flowing - everything is clear: the construction

of a hydroelectric power station. Everyone knows about the hydroelectric power station. And few people - about the underground city. If you look at the slopes of the Zhiguli, you will not see anything suspicious. Everything is hidden. So you can walk near the special stage of the NKVD from year to year: in the forest there is a green fence and wire, and dogs are lying. What's behind the fence? Yes, you never know! We have everything in secret.

5

Chekists look at the Firebird. They understand. The bag is foreign. Boots with thick soles. Luger on the side. Attention to her. Reverence. Bocharov forbade talking about her, forbade asking questions. So it is clear without question: a saboteur. In the camp of Spanish children, babbles are not our way. The language is improving. Clearly, without question - they sent General Franco to prepare to execute. The thing is necessary. Nastya went to the special stage. Nothing interesting. Nothing suspicious: a forest, a railway station in the

forest, mass graves, a shooting range, an abandoned temple, a holiday home, Spanish children, warehouses. Today I stumbled upon the execution path.

A path has been trampled between the station and the graves. On this path is a paddock. Nastya saw it empty, the fences were two heights, the boards overlapped, but the gates were wide open. There are ten cabinets in the corral. Five branches each. Closets in the corral - horseshoe. But obviously the paddock is not idle. There is no folk trail leading to it.

The grass is trampled down - like a herd of elephants here every night goes to a watering place. Nastya runs back and forth through the forests: are they watching? No. They don't follow. In the forest, she makes a dash, and then hides and looks. No, they don't follow. She cannot run away from here. And she can't find anything interesting in the forests. The senior major of state security Bocharov is calm. Does not show excitement. Self-assured.

Laughs.

6

Every day there is shooting at the special stage. Either they train at the shooting range, or they shoot people. Probably both. The labor force in the Zhiguli tunnels wears out quickly. So its echelons - here, to the special stage. Nastya saw how the trains crawled through the gates of the special stage. And to the station.

Echelons are driven in late at night. They stand at the station until dawn. And at dawn they cordon off the station, corral and burial grounds
convoy...

7

The accordion player stretched out the fur, and the song burst out:

How the storm hugged us ...

And they picked it up:

***Then Her blue eyes smiled at you and me
through the smoke.***

Ordinary people. Romantics. Humble heroes. They do an important thing - they shoot enemies. The more they shoot, the sooner a brighter future will come. Their inconspicuous heroic work is the struggle for the happiness of all mankind. For peace on earth. Good

evening. Here on the special stage in the summer, as in a sanatorium, the families of the NKVD leadership live. Here the regional leadership rests: the secretaries of the regional committee, the prosecutor, comrades from the regional executive committee. With families. Every evening in a clearing near the river, the whole society gathers. Fish soup is boiled in the evenings, crayfish. The beer is cold straight from the

barrel. So the beer is called - "Zhigulevskoye". Bocharov forbade gossiping about Nastya. And they don't gossip. Here

women are special. They understand: chatting too much ... So they don't chat. But they know: Comrade Stalin sent a girl to prepare for the murder of Franco himself. Or Trotsky. No, of course not Trotsky. She teaches, they say, Spanish - this is against Franco. Trotsky lives in Mexico. If I learned that... Got it...

And to the wives of party leaders - with a nod: that one, big-eyed. This is which? Yes, out! Is this the one? But how can such a skinny thing be on such a thing? General Franco is so fat. Will it work? Shhh... The Firebird has warmed up by the haystack, listening to the

conversations around, smiling at something. The blue Zhiguli cliffs swayed beyond the Volga, the black sky trembled softly, and the Firebird flew to a beautiful country, to a country of the future, where people will be honest and kind, even more honest and kinder than now ...

And Nastya decided that there was no conspiracy here. Absolutely no. She just looks for conspiracies and wants to find, and the one who seeks always finds. This is known from our songs. There is no conspiracy at the special stage of the Kuibyshev department of the NKVD. Such kind, such honest people cannot conspire against the power of the workers and peasants, against Comrade Stalin, who is defending the power of the people from rogues who have stuck their noses in.

Podsel Bocharov.

- How is the training?

- Fine. - Is
there anything to
help? - No thanks.

"You know, Firebird, you were seen today near the paddock.
- I know.

"Of course, you have no idea why there are cupboards in the corral?"
And we have a belief: if one of the uninitiated sees these cabinets, then he
will not live long. A person can see such cabinets only once in a lifetime,
and immediately must die.

What about you and your
people? "This does not apply to me and my people. We are dedicated.
We are entrusted with the secret of the cabinets. We work with these
cabinets. These are, so to speak, our means of production. Therefore, this
belief does not concern us, as it were. But the one to whom this secret is
not entrusted dies quickly after he sees such a closet.

Bocharov has a bad face. And bad eyes. They say that black diamonds
exist in nature, and so his eyes are exactly like that: black, cold, sparkling.
With such eyes, at least cut the glass. Satan is Satan. You can topple over
with just one look. Nastya imagined that she was a client to Bocharov in a
torture chamber for investigation. Turned her over. And Bocharov's tone is
not good. He said one thing, but a frank

threat is heard in the words: "You came to us at the special stage with
an important paper, but you won't get out of here. And the papers won't
help. So run through the woods, pretend to be a saboteur, sniff around -
you won't find anything. " Nastya Bocharov smiled with a charming smile: -
Comrade

senior major of state security, I am an initiate. I am a
performer just like you. I know what cabinets are for. She worked with
them herself. True, not on knitting, but on performances. Our technique is
standard everywhere: you know, a hollow, where the neck meets the skull...

Nastya wanted to add: "Here you have Chekists shooting people, and
we are Chekists at home," but did not. She just gave Bocharov another
radiant smile.

The senior major of state security departed. He scolds himself. I thought to scare the girl in such a way as to discourage the secrets of the NKVD from sniffing out. And she wasn't scared.

Anyone who meets with a glance, gesture, action must be crushed. Always. So the senior major of state security does. Presses. I tried it against the Stalinist controller - it did not burn out. And I decided for myself: one - zero. In her favor. And she's not as naive as she might seem. Bocharov departed, and Nastya decided:

there was a conspiracy.

Chapter 22

1

Autumn is deciduous. Autumn is rustling. Nastya is walking through the forest. He walks laughing at himself. They let her through to the special stage on paper, and then what? You can walk near Bocharov for a year - you won't learn anything. Or maybe ten years. In the rest house of the NKVD - a reserve command post of the regional administration. There is a communication center and safes. But the communication center is guarded, and the doors are made of iron, and the windows are barred, and signalmen work there around the clock. And Bocharov is not so stupid as to keep something unlawful in his working safe. And Bocharov is not so stupid as to say something superfluous in the working rooms.

I wonder where the dragon is now? Did you return from America? And what there he has for the results?

And the results can't be fun. If he had taken the Control Block in America and returned safely, Comrade Stalin would have immediately recalled Nastya from the special stage - there would be nothing for her to do here. Comrade Stalin would pick up the government telephone and say: come on, return my bird, its practice has ended. And Bocharov would have let her go. If there is no conspiracy, will some Bocharov dare to disobey Stalin and disobey his order?

But there is a conspiracy. And that is why the Firebird is not recalled from the special stage of the Kuibyshev Directorate of the NKVD. What

can she do? Nothing can. Runs through the woods. Bocharov understands that she sent to sniff out something, but Nastenka won't burn out.

Nastya thought about the options and decided not to panic and not to fuss. If there is a conspiracy, if the "Control-block" is stolen, then he should be either in Moscow or somewhere nearby. Even here, it's more accurate: "Control Block" is mainly intended for Zhiguli.

If there is a conspiracy, then there must be preparation. There should be intensive contacts between participants. And where? It is

not clear: if Bocharov needs to talk to his people about something illegal, where does he do it? A short conversation is

forest. Forests on the special stage are in abundance. Well, if the conversation with booze all night,

then where? But a conspiracy is not born just like that in the forest, and it does not mature in the forest. The conspiracy, if Perzeev's conclusions are to be believed, begins with the participants' trust in each other. The conspiracy begins in a homely, confidential atmosphere. Where is it? Not in the office. And not in the apartment, because the apartments of the Chekists are tapped, and they know it. Where then? Somewhere in the forest near Moscow, in a cozy house. Or in the forest near the Zhiguli. Also in a cozy house. If here, near the Zhiguli, the fate of the country and the world is being decided, then the conspirators

should gather here. And not once. Where? Nastya went around all the forests. There is

no cozy house in the forests on the special stage. He is not here. It has its own railway station, there is a paddock, there are burials under young Christmas trees, there are burials under five-year-old Christmas trees, there are also burials

under ten-year-old ones, there is a rest house, there is a camp for Spanish children ... Stop. Why not in the camp? If Nastya were the head of the Kuibyshev department of the NKVD, why not arrange a feast for friends with entertainment in a children's

camp? There is a kitchen there. There are beds. In which case, there is where to sleep off. Would Nastya arrange a feast in the camp of Spanish children? No. Wouldn't suit. There are light houses. They will listen there. And friends will get drunk, they will yell. The music will blare. And next to the security, next to the staff. Bad rumors will spread. Yes, and the commander's wives are nearby. It would be best - in a building with indestructible walls.

And a little away from the rest home. Slightly from the security and staff on the side. Nastya was very tired, she went all the way and across, she did not find anything. Sits on a hillock. Nobody

around. Behind her, blocking the horizon, is a huge abandoned temple. Sebastian

told her: look for a barbut! He is a katran. There is no such place here. No ... And suddenly she froze with her mouth open. And carefully, slowly turned her head, not believing herself. In front of her is an abandoned temple. All beams illu

over the Volga. Right in the middle of the special stage. You can see it for tens of kilometers from the Volga steamers. You can even see it from behind the forest - it rises above

the trees. Why not in it? Why not arrange a secret brothel in the most visible place, where no one will look?

2

Hazel, raspberry creeps Nastya to the temple. face and hands scratched with thorns.

Here he is.

Handsome. Nobody around. And there was no one near the cathedral for ten years. Between the slabs of granite stalks of grass run amok. All paths are overgrown. Nature quickly takes its toll if a person is not around. A steel strip is superimposed on the iron doors of the door. And sealed tight. Long brewed. The steel strip, like both door leaves, is corroded by years of rust. The vines of wild roses have long since broken through between the steps and braided the whole door. You can't approach the walls: everything is overgrown. For a long time. The windows were broken back in the Civil War, but the patterned frames and bars remained. They are for thorny bushes like garden trellises - everything is braided. The windows are bricked up from the inside. They built the cathedral for centuries. And then the communists blocked the windows from the inside with bricks - also for centuries. And the only door was sealed. And then mother nature covered everything from the base to the roof with wild roses. Like a fairy tale by the Brothers Grimm. For ten years, or even fifteen, no one went

here. Grass is not mint. The bushes are not broken. Just don't fool Nastya. She is already sure that there is something inside. Yes, not

something, but the main thing. Why Comrade Stalin sent her here. Unbroken bushes, unrumpled grass will not deceive the Firebird. Rust on the door will not deceive. Everything at first glance smells of desolation. But not everything is as simple as it seems at first glance. Why didn't they organize a club in the temple? Or a gym? If not needed, why didn't they blow it up? Sometimes, at abandoned buildings, windows are laid with bricks so that no one can climb in. It's like that. But here it was possible not to waste strength, cement and bricks: the wind

Why also brick? And if the windows were laid with bricks, it could be done carelessly, blunder, at random. And here the windows are laid soundly. For what? There is something

inside. But two questions remained unanswered. First: how does Bocharov get in there? Second: how can Nastya get there? It's easy with

Bocharov. Someone before him dug an underground passage into the temple, and walled up the doors and windows. Digging underground is not a problem. If people have been shot here for many years, then there was enough gratuitous labor force. And not only muscular-digging, but also mentally engineering. It was possible to dig in some places and in an open way. They are digging the ground here all the time. Nobody will be surprised. Then the participants in the construction - in the paddock.

Not to say too much. If the doors were welded long ago and the windows were blocked long ago, then the underground passage was dug long ago. Predecessors. Maybe Chekists from all over the Union come here for their secret gatherings. And if one end of the underground passage is in the temple, then it is better to take the other to the investigation building. Chekists seem to be leaving for the investigation. With associates. They go behind five rows of barbed wire. Behind iron doors. All night long. Nobody will suspect. Even wives. And from the investigation building to the temple through the underground passage - to lay a telephone cable. In which case, here I am. You can also attach an extension cord to the Moscow government phone. At any time of the day or night, you can answer Moscow cheerfully: yes, I work, I close.

There is complete clarity on this issue. Maybe not everything is right in the details, but there is no doubt about the main thing: the

underground passage. But how can Nastya get into the immured temple?

3

She crawled around, figured. There is less vegetation under the wall on the north side. Kind of like a lawn. On all sides the lawn is closed with lilacs. About three meters from the ground there is a window sill the width of a wagon shelf, and the window goes up. It is necessary to scatter, run two meters along a vertical wall and grab onto the bars.

Then - along the lattice as if up and down the stairs. Where the window ends, there is a whole pattern of brick lace. Follow these patterns to get to the corner. Along all the roofs, a cornice hangs. How

to bypass the cornice? It's easy to get around. From the roof around the eaves, the downpipe bends. The pipe is rusted. But the brackets on which she was held are in place. They will stick around for another two hundred years until they rust. So, along the brackets - around the eaves. And on the roof. Roof slopes go in tiers. Where the lower tier has a peak, there is the foot of the middle one, and where the middle one ends, the upper one begins there. Just don't slip. If only not to fall through the roof - the beams and rafters could rot. If only from the ground someone did not lift his head up.

Here on these roofs and climb to the bell tower itself. The bell tower is lifted to heaven. But there is something to hold on to. The pattern on the bell tower is brick and narrow tall windows. The glass is also broken, but the frames and grilles remain. Again on the bars, like stairs. And at the very top of the hole from a small artillery shell. These are clearly red from the other side of the Volga from the Zhiguli. If

there is nowhere to shoot, then at the bell tower. The shell broke through the wall, but did not explode. The hole is small. A person cannot get through, except perhaps a cat. But Nastya does not differ in fatness from us. In addition, at the edges of the hole, the bricks can be loosened. Take out a dozen bricks - maybe you can

squeeze in. The same problem: you tear one brick out of the wall, and where is it? throw it to rumble on the iron roof?

4

Nastya got ready at the crack of dawn as if she were going to a regular workout. Black tight-fitting clothes, mask, English colonial boots, an almost empty duffel bag, two parachute lines, a flashlight, a knife, a pistol, lock picks, a flask of water, an airborne ration. In the backyards I picked up a piece of iron like a crowbar, to loosen the bricks. In her bag. What else? More gloves. And surprises for the dogs.

Out of the main building. Towards Bocharov. Good and kind. Nastya knows that he owes a few days in the central building

Conduct the NKVD in Kuibyshev, and for several days at the special stage. But without a break, Bocharov sits on the special stage. He says there are a lot of executions, yes this, and that. As if there is no one to shoot without him.

Improved Bocharov. Maybe he felt a worthy opponent. Nastya smiled. The Kremlin instructions do not ask questions, so Bocharov asks the most general: - Well, how? - Nothing, - Nastya smiles. I'm going to do some reconnaissance.

5

The tambourines struck a distant melody, the violins howled:

***Ah, my cucumbers,
Tomato-chi-ki,
Stalin killed Kirov In
the corridor-chi-ke.***

A young woman in a long dress walked around easily and freely. Understands Nastya is a professional dancer. And her head is not spinning. Not otherwise from paratroopers. And the body is spinning like a top. At one place. It seems that the woman does not rearrange her legs. And he doesn't take her away. And the long skirt opens with a parachute. Not even a parachute, but a chamomile flower. The parachute opens in a dome, and then the skirt spun in a circle in one plane, exposing thin, slender legs in black stockings. A woman is spinning, not getting tired, smiling a mysterious smile. She does not follow the music, but the music sounds for her. Fits under it. What an orchestra Bocharov has! What an orchestra! There are ten people in all. Violins, tambourines, balalaikas and guitars. Nastya listened, enchanted. And the orchestra suddenly smoothly switched to another melody, and such a can-can burst out, which happens only in the decomposed West. The

Dictionary of Foreign Words defines the can-can as a "French variety dance with immodest body movements." And six girls went to throw their legs into the sky. That's where the talent is!

The hall is filled with guests. Streams of cigarette smoke floated up to the ceiling. Noise, din, fun. Waiters pour vodka. They promised to send from Moscow to the Kuibyshev department of the NKVD a box of some newest vodka for testing. Yes, everyone does not send. Because the guests are more and more "Hunting" cost.

Guests come out of the ground into the hall. As Nastya expected. And she watches the fun from the balcony. If you go down from the bell tower, you will not get into the hall, because a long time ago bricks and blocks of stone fell from above along the spiral staircase to the very bottom. The iron door to the stairs was closed, so it was filled up from the inside with debris. Many years have passed, and no one has tried to open the door. Need not. So Nastya climbed the outer wall of the bell tower in the afternoon, squeezed through the narrow window and went down the broken spiral staircase to the balcony. And further it is impossible. Further stuffed. During the day, the church was empty and dark: the windows were blocked, only a few rays through a hole in the roof get inside. Accustomed

eyes to the darkness, looked around Nastya. After the door to the stairs was blocked, there was no one on the balcony. Everything is in the dust. Everywhere where Nastya stepped, - traces. No one here on the dark balcony will get it, no one will see it. Here she hid.

By evening, the servants came into the hall, they lit a lot of candles, colored lanterns turned on. Closer to the night, the hall was filled with people, and fun began. Nastya looks at

the fun from above. Just don't sneeze from the dust. And her heart beats: for many hours she climbed like an ant along the church walls, did no one notice? One thing to note is...

Nastya thought that churches for gyms are also good for granaries. It turns out that they are also suitable for underground entertainment establishments. The main thing is the walls of impenetrable thickness. They muffle the sounds, and those sounds do not fly far. And the height of the temple plays a role - the air here is clean and fresh. Tobacco smoke goes up to the ceiling, and the ceiling is right there.

And space for dancing. And for gambling tables. And there is where to retire with laughing girls. The fun is like in the Konotop park, only the muzzles are not beaten yet. There is a big game in the middle of the hall. The chervonets are ringing. Nikolaev. Alexandrovskiy. Leninsky. And paper money on the tables in bundles. Banknotes crunch. Our relatives are blue with a proletarian and a Red Army soldier. And not ours, green ones, with the sights of Washington and wise presidents. The game is on, and the girls are dancing, and the violins are crying, and the smoke has gone like a yoke.

The hall is filling up. Ay, who is it? This is the first secretary of the regional committee of the Communist Party. And the chairman of the regional executive committee. They told their wives that, together with Bocharov, they were unraveling the web of counter-revolution in the detention barracks, while they themselves were here. At the tables.

And the regional prosecutor. Came to check how the laws are observed.

And Comrade Sarkisov appeared. This one lives in Moscow. Nastya remembers his position - the head of the construction department of the NKVD. He is here on a long business trip, directing the construction of an underground city. And Deputy People's Commissar

of Communications Comrade Prokofiev. This one is also long-term. Under his control in the underground city, kilometers of tunnels are filled with communication equipment. Nastya thought that the steeper the

terror, the fewer underground entertainment establishments. But it is the other way around. Feast in Time of Plague. People rejoice. Hurry to live. And enjoy. Cancan girls perform for the fifth time. Hey, okay. Nastya on the balcony behind the column. She can see everything from here. Everything is

heard. The acoustics in the temple are such that sounds fly upward from the bottom, amplifying and not distorting. All seditious conversations are so audible, as if Nastya is sitting at the table next to Bocharov and shuffling cards. Only Nastya does not want to listen to seditious conversations. Nastya is all about music. Music disturbed

the soul. Oh, nun, what a life floats past you! What game! A Chekist den, but it looks like a wild holiday for officers of the Cavalier Guard Regiment.

If only Nastya would come down. She would show them the cancan. If only Nastya would come down and say to Bocharov: take me with you to the conspiracy,

I love adventure and I love risk. I'll tell you all Stalin's secrets, just let me dance.

Nastya Bocharova saw in a different light. But a handsome man. Black gypsy, tar curls, squinting with an evil and wild eye. Hungry for power. If they take power, then Bocharov will crush Yezhov, and Frinovsky, and Berman. It's a pity that life is so arranged: either Stalin will cut Bocharov's throat, or Bocharov will cut Stalin's throat. But in a different scenario, Bocharov could have been a faithful support of Stalin's power. It's a pity that. A stallion, cleaner than Holovanov. The girls so and curl in front of him. And in front of his guests. Those, too, are men in beauty. All young, all Stalinist nominees.

It's hard to take your eyes off the music. But Nastya is distracted, catches the

conversation. All about cards

and girls. - Twenty-one is a lucky

number ... But this can be understood in two ways. In the literal sense: for a gambler, twenty-one is a lucky number. On the one side. On the other hand, a month later, November 7, 1938, is the twenty-first anniversary of October. Everything is so formed that it is on the holidays that they will take power. And before that they cannot: in Zhiguli, the installation of special communications equipment

has not been completed. - It's good

for you, Sasha Bocharov. - It will be good on the seventh of November. Let's have some we will dance the cancan symphony orchestra.

7

Nastya is sitting in a shelter and suddenly a hunch illuminates her. It's simple: if Bocharov can arrange orgies here, in church, if here, in church, he can talk about whatever he wants, lose and win millions, then he considers this place his hiding place, his safe and protected place. Therefore ... Therefore, he must store the most important things and documents here.

Church hiding places... Nastya heard a lot about church hiding places... Under multi-ton stone floor slabs. In the thickness of the walls. In the stone crevices of deep cellars. In the underground passages

who go to the ancestral crypts. Or ... Or the documents are in the most visible place, where no one pays attention to them.

Chapter 23

1

Farewell waltz. "Amur Waves". The music went off at four o'clock. More precisely - at four eleven. They extinguished the candles. Turned off the lights. Only now Nastya realized that she had not slept for two nights. One Nastya in the church. From the arch of the oval face looks at her. Eyes huge scary. Soul is drilled.

Nastya knows the secret of how to draw an icon or a poster so that her eyes always look at the viewer. Wherever the viewer moves away, scary eyes will follow him. This is done quite simply: you need to draw a symmetrical face and symmetrical eyes so that the head turns neither to the right nor to the left. And in the eyes, the pupils should be drawn right in the middle. That's all. Wherever you go, the eyes from the portrait are looking at you. In the old days, this drove people crazy.

Nastya hasn't left yet. He knows that religion is the opium of the people. He knows, but does not look up at the face with huge eyes. Everything is scary. Nastya tied a stone column with a parachute sling and, as silkworm on the cobweb, went down from the balcony into the hall.

I looked around. Huge church. Where is the most prominent place? There was an altar here. And now there is nothing. What if it's nearby? There is a small room next to it. It's all full of rubble. Once a shell hit, the wall did not break, but a lot collapsed inside. Nobody cleaned up here. So everything lies. Beneath the heaps of rubble is the corner of a huge rusty safe. Church valuables were obviously kept in this safe.

Nastya shone a flashlight. Rusty safe. Lies on the side. WITH the revolution itself. Locked.

Why is it locked? Yes, because the owners locked it, took the keys and fled. Could this be? This may be. But only comrades communists, having discovered an overturned and locked safe, they would certainly break it open. And he would lie here with broken sides.

If it is possible to imagine that for many years the communists did not try to crack the overturned safe, then Bocharov would not have bypassed him.

Therefore, if the safe is not cracked, then Bocharov put it here. If the safe is locked, then Bocharov is locked. Bocharov could well find an old safe of the

Putilov factory with a set of keys and throw it picturesquely under piles of rubble. There is no better hiding place. Only Bocharov and his friends have this access to the church, but only with his permission. Outsiders cannot enter the church. And even if he climbs in, he is unlikely to pay attention to the rusty safe, which lies overturned in front of everyone. And if he pays attention, he won't open it. The safe is truly amazing. Nastya had not seen such people before. Looked carefully. The safe

is all rusty, but the keyhole is not rusty at all. The well is clean. The well is lubricated with gun oil. Even the smell is felt.

Nastya has a memory from childhood. They wandered through the forest with their father, found a clearing near the railway line, decided not to go further, decided not to pick mushrooms, decided to just sit in the sun, catch butterflies.

In the evening we went home. Nastya says to her father: - You know,

there is a secret military factory nearby. Father agreed:

- True, there is a

secret military factory nearby. Only you, how do you know? - It's simple, - Nastya

answers. - We spent the day at the railway line, and not a single train. -

And what? - And the fact that the rails are knurled

to a shine. Railway branch use, but only at night.

- So, maybe not a military plant, but a civilian one? -

Why don't they drive trains during the day, but wait for the night? - Or maybe a military

unit? - The military unit does not need from year to year every night something carry. We were here last year, then the rails also shone.

- Well, - the father does not give up, - maybe it really is a factory, but why do you think that it is

nearby? Because the line is not a main line. There would be traffic on the main line. And this is a dead end thread. How far can a branch

stretch? It

was then that her father said to her for the first time: be you, Anastasia, a spy. Great. And

now the situation is the same: the safe seems to be abandoned, only someone regularly opens and closes it. The edges of the well are shiny, like those rails rolled to a shine. Often the key is in this hole. And the massive steel hinges on which the safe door sits are oiled. There was a little bit of dust in the grooves. It stuck there where the oil leaks. Everything is clear: Bocharov keeps something important in the safe. And it has nothing to do with his official activities. Official secrets are kept in safes in offices. - Come on, comrade safe, let's get acquainted

with you. And let's move on to "you". I am a simple person. My name is Nastya. Nastya puts on gloves, takes out master

keys. Pick-up key
twists in the hole, with carnations, hairpins. The lock does not fit.

It dawns late in October. It is dark in the church because the windows are walled up. Just a streak of light across the floor. This is a ray through a hole in the roof climbed. It's noon.

Nastya realized that she had been working with the safe for a long time, but did not

open it. Do not open. And Nastya knows, she knows not with logic, but with a feminine feeling, that this is precisely the safe, that it contains exactly what she needs, what Kholovanov needs, what Comrade Stalin needs.

But somehow Nastya even feels sorry for opening the safe. It's like turning someone's soul inside out. A bear, not a safe. Terrible and unapproachable. And it's also a pity. Nastya hugged a rusty iron

giant:

- You are my bear! Love you. I love you iron. I love you, stupid. My life is in you, damn. To hell with you and your content. Keep it for yourself. Save, iron greedy. I just love you so much. And I will love you until death. And if I survive, I will come here and take it forever with me. I'll clean and paint you. And I will love. And now I love. I love like Stalin. I love how...

Nastya wanted to say, but did not say who she loves. Just remembered the big man. A man in a red silk shirt. Then he came out before the people, huge, like a Putilovsky safe.

factory. Powerful, like a Putilov factory safe. Unapproachable, like the safe of the Putilov factory. Nastya

turned away from the safe. She pressed her back against him. She sits and feels sorry for herself. Why is there no happiness in life? If you remember all the bad things that happened to her, then at least cry. Here she is crying. For the second time in my life. A lot has accumulated in the soul. Life is absurd.

Nastya sits, smears tears down her cheeks with a dirty hand. No one needs, no one loves. Blade-empty-color. Not a Firebird, but a skinny fox. They talk about her in the monastery. They talk for nothing. There is nothing between them, and never has been.

Then the big man did not enter the platform, but took off. And she stood aside and kept waiting for her to call: "Nastyuha, come on, show yourself to the people." He was so handsome back then. So everyone loved him. And she is the most. More than all of them together. He called her

to the people, but she did not to the people, she flew to him. The foundry shop went crazy when they saw her. And all because at that moment she was glowing from the inside. Even sparks were falling from her. She glowed with love. Sparkled with love.

Nastya hugged the safe impregnable, like her love undivided. - My

bear. Love you. And I don't expect anything from you. Neither on that I do not hope. You are an iron fool.

And his fist.

This is how love is sometimes expressed. Fist. To hurt a loved one. And then there is the expression of love. Higher. Get away from the being you love. Forever. Quit. Break. To remember for the rest of my life. With bitterness and pain. Leave, I decided to leave. She has

plenty of time until evening. But she leaves to hurt himself. And to him.

She

pulled the lockpick towards herself. Does not exceed. Turned left and right. And inside the safe - click.

The Firebird did not believe.

She didn't want him to open up. She knew she wouldn't open. Haven't even tried to open it yet. I realized that it was impossible. Resigned. A
He...

And he clicked. Now just turn the knob. Nastya grabbed the handle and immediately threw it away, as if touching a red-hot piece of iron. I realized: there is a safe on the side, turn the handle, the door will fall off by itself, like a folding shelf. And in the door, if not a ton, then half a ton. Slam her door like a fly. And there will be a roar for the whole district. How to open it without crashing? The one who opens this safe somehow contrives. Nearby, dry sleepers are heaped in heaps of rubble. It is clear where the

rubble came from: a long time ago a shell slammed against the wall, fragments flew inside the church. And who brought the sleepers here to the church? For what? No wonder they are here.

Nastya put two sleepers under the door of the safe. She turned the handle. WITH The door fell off with a muffled groan, but not much: it rested against the sleepers.

Now pull the sleepers a little. Also little by little the door opens... So the

Count of Monte Cristo opened his chest. Something flashed in the safe. Locked safe. Clogged with coins, orders, ingots.

The Firebird is not indifferent to ancient orders. What is this? This is officer George. Second degree. And this? This is also officer George, only not with George, smashing a snake, but with an eagle. Order with an eagle - for non-believers. They do not believe in St. George, so they were given the St. George Cross with the Russian coat of arms. George with an eagle is a rarity. He has no price. When the highlanders of the Caucasus were awarded the officer George, they did not understand: why do you have a horseman on the order, and I have a bird? This is Vladimir with swords, with swords in the center.

And this Vladimir with swords, but the swords are on the upper beam. And Vladimir - this one without swords, just a golden cross under red enamel. Here is Stanislav with a crown. Also Stanislav, but without a crown, with swords. And again Stanislav, but without a crown and without swords. In most of the orders of Stanislav, the eagles have wings up, but they also come across with wings down. There is also Annushka. Anna around the neck. With swords. Anna on the neck without swords. Anna

first degree on a ribbon, Anna on the chest, Anna of the fourth degree - she was worn on a

weapon. Lord, how many captured officers had to be exterminated in order to collect such a collection? An officer regiment, no less. And here is Alexander Nevsky in diamonds. They knew how to make orders before. The Order of Lenin is beautiful, but officer George is more beautiful. And stricter. And here are the soldiers' crosses.

Silver and gold. How much gold! Nastya completely forgot where she was and why. And the safe seems bottomless. Heaps of coins. Give or take - a treasure cave into which Ali Baba fell. And beads, and earrings, and pendants. This is also the booty of execution cellars. Ingots, nuggets. Then Nastya Zhar the bird remembered that if she was Ali Baba in a magical cave, then somewhere nearby there must be forty robbers. OK. Forget about

sapphires and rubies.

It is necessary

to think about the main thing. Is there a main point here? Eat. Main. The safe lies on its side, and therefore the shelves in it do not serve as shelves, but as dividing walls. Here it is,

the very thing she was looking for - a steel case with sharp corners. Even before opening it, Nastya knew that this was what she needed. What Stalin needs. What Bocharov needs. This is the control block. This is the key to all communication systems in the Soviet Union. Heavy briefcase. On the side under the handle is a simple clasp. It's even a shame that such a frivolous fastener. For that only, it is adjusted so that the sashes do not open. Even disappointment from this fastener died.

The Firebird placed the steel briefcase on the floor, unfastened the clasp, and lifted the lid. Inside the velvet is black, just like in a case for a diamond necklace. Instead of a diamond necklace, there are two nickel-plated steel plates with many holes. Between the plates there is an incredible interweaving of gold wires and all sorts of details: a mixture of electrical engineering and jewelry art. Steel plates are clearly designed so that under no circumstances will the electrical interior be damaged. Even in appearance, despite all the jewelry subtlety of the internal structure, this thing seems indestructible and

impenetrable. How did Holovanov manage to screw up such a thing? How did Bocharov manage to track down Holovanov and steal this thing?

Now is not the time to solve puzzles. "Control-block" - in a steel briefcase, a briefcase - in a bag. What else

does Bocharov have? More handfuls of diamonds, emeralds, rough diamonds, white metal bullion. Silver or platinum? Platinum. All this is not interesting. What else? More folders. The folders are sealed in large envelopes of rough gray paper. On print envelopes. On one envelope is the inscription "Gutalin" and a funny portrait of Comrade Stalin. On twelve other envelopes there are inscriptions "Dragon" and portraits of Holovanov. Pencil. Someone is good at drawing. The fire bird respects everyone who owns his hand. A person must be able to draw. And write poetry.

"Gutalina" - in a bag. What about other envelopes?
Read. Remember. Destroy. The
Firebird is sitting, reading.

Nastya suddenly unfolded the secret life of Holovanov, widely known under the nickname Dragon. Reads Nastya, surprised. So that's what you are!

It got quite dark. Turned on the flashlight. Reading by the lamp. And there are many documents on the Dragon. And the transcripts of his overheard conversations. And some references. There is only one folder for Stalin, because you don't particularly watch Stalin. Stalin is always behind the Kremlin walls. Stalin is always in his dachas-fortresses. Because there is only one daddy for Stalin. Maybe something else from pre-revolutionary times. The folder with the inscription "Gutalin" does not interest her. The folder was sealed with the seal of the Kuibyshev Department of the NKVD, even if it remains under seal. Comrade Stalin does not need to be controlled. Comrade Stalin is beyond suspicion. But the Dragon must be under control.

Nastya tears off the seals from the packages, unfolds the folders, reads eagerly. The dragon flies all over the world. The plane was refueled there. The plane was being repaired. There he was visiting, here - at a concert. And he has competitions one after another. And girls around him, and girls. Garlands. Clusters. And photographs in folders. Holovanov on vacation. Holovanov in a circle. Holovanov in Yalta. Holovanov in Sukhumi. Holovanov at the Metropol. So Nastya found herself. Here she takes

a hefty girl has a bouquet, and on her face it is written: "Give me back, you bastard, a bouquet. I'll shoot." Right there in the frame of Holovanov. Or here Nastya in a white apron with a silver tray appears from behind the scenes. But Nastya is fluffy, like a polar explorer. And Holovanov is nearby. Here is Nastya in a white granite palace, in her chambers. Undresses. What a shame. The photo quality is unmatched. Everything is seen. And Holovanov is in the other wing of the palace. Here is his photograph. He also undresses. He also steams in a Finnish bath. He also swims in the pool. So he had his own pool, and his own bathhouse! If he had come to Nastya that night, she would have driven him away.

But he didn't come.

3

Vote.

Pierced her, penetrated. Where is she? I looked around. She is in the church. Why is he sitting with a lantern? Because the day is over and dusk has descended. I got carried away. The day is gone. The night has come. And at night there is dancing again in the church until the morning. Open the door.

They're coming. Nastya decided to close the safe door with a lever. So that the open door does not rush into the eyes. Does not work. She rolled it with a sleeper so that his insides, torn by diamonds, would not sparkle. And okay. And come down. And between the columns - a shadow. Shadow. To the sling. And they are already here. And they all light candles.

On the line - up it. Up. And the hall is brighter. Down below, the candles melted the darkness, and in the choir stalls, under the dome, darkness. And there, into the darkness. Nastya climbs along the sling, like a quick spider on a cobweb. Slipped onto the balcony, pulled up the sling. Hidden. Have you seen her? Didn't you hear? No. People in

the twilight are busy with their own. Tables are covered. Then along the stairs - to the top of the bell tower, through the gap - to the brick patterns, carefully along them down to the roof, and there it is already quite simple. It is a pity that there is more cargo on it than on a camel from the movie "Dzhulbars".

What to do with folders? You can't take all thirteen far. She also has a Control Block on her back in a bag. Sixteen kilograms, and presses on the shoulders like a mortar plate.

She will carry the "control-block" with her, but she needs to get rid of the folders. One, the one on Stalin, to hide. Burn the rest. Where to hide? Where to burn?

In a flash, the Firebird runs inaudibly, like a fox that has stolen a chicken. Where to hide the folder on Stalin? Bury in the grave? How then to find? And if she hides, and Bocharov finds? You have to hide it so you don't find it. And under her own feet - mothballs, mothballs. And tobacco. For the dogs to sneeze.

From the lilac thickets the Firebird sees, feels in his gut: a quiet panic at the special stage of the NKVD. No one is shooting yet, no one is still blowing the horn, no one is ringing the bells. But anxiety. The point is understandable: the lackeys from the secret brothel saw a huge rusty overturned safe every night in the rubble. Got used to it. Human psychology: if it lies in plain

sight, if it is rusty and overturned, then it is empty. Someone once locked it, so it is locked and lies. And today lackeys entered the church through the underground passage, set about their usual business, suddenly blinded their safe opened with diamonds. Something to take from the open safe did not dare. They know the power of Bocharovsky's anger. They know the master's hand. They ran to Bocharov, reported, fell on their knees: not to blame ...

Night falls on the special stage of the NKVD, anxiety is growing.

4

Nastya got out on the lawn to the paddock. Cabinets along the walls of the horseshoe. And the gates to the pen are not locked. Because there is no one here now. Because the corral is on the territory of the special stage. There is no need to guard it, just as there is no need to guard an empty barrack, just as there is no need to lock up an empty punishment cell. Nastya looked around, and - into the corral. Who will think of

looking here? The execution pen has been trampled down, as cattle pens are trampled down at a meat-packing plant. It will be difficult for dogs to find here. Here the smells of thousands of people are mixed.

Which closet to choose? Far right. The soil is sand. With Nastya's hands, sand is raked from under the iron cabinet. Digs like a fox under a chicken coop. dug. An envelope

sealed with a case against Stalin - in a hole under the iron cabinet. And buried. And tobacco around, tobacco. Who will guess? And then it's easy for her to find. Even if the cabinets are removed, the place where they stood will be visible for another year. What to do with the other twelve envelopes?

Kindle a fire? There are many holes here. Light a fire in the hole. They won't see it from the outside. And it won't take much time. Then leave. But how to get out of the zone? You won't come out. You won't go out

under normal circumstances. And now the guards are strengthened everywhere, now everyone is on their feet raised. It

was easy to enter here, having the document of the Central Committee, but how to get out? No wonder Comrade Stalin said that he was sending to death. It won't be difficult for Bocharov to catch her here in stunted woods, shove her into the plane and drop her with a parachute, having previously imposed knots on the slings. And report to Moscow: sorry, but she died. And you can not report to Moscow. For Bocharov, the situation is now - hit or miss. Not to report to Moscow, but to take communications under control.

And power.

Nastya pressed the "Control-block" to her chest like a beloved creature: I won't give it back. Her thought beats like an accurate chronometer: ho-ho-dee, ho-ho-dee, u ho-

dee. How will you leave? As you enter the zone, you must leave. Tomorrow we will perform at the special stage of the NKVD. This means that today a train of veal wagons was driven into the zone.

Huge special stage. All of them are here. Even the train station. All floodlights flooded. The locomotive hisses, seven boxcars. From the spotlights, the light is blinding, almost blue. Patrols with dogs around. All attention is on the wagons. Here, on station, the panic has not yet come.

Nastya came out onto the rails and calmly goes to the locomotive. Silly, but what else can you think of. The attention of the guards is on the wagons, and not on the locomotive, on the bushes that are around the wagons, and not on the open railway bed. And she only two minutes to walk to the locomotive.

She arrived calmly. She climbed the stairs to the cockpit. The bag is heavy - on the floor. She clicked with a pistol bolt: - In the name of Comrade Stalin ... And there are three of them. One with a shovel. The second with a wrench. The third without a shovel and without a key, but the paws are like claws. Take it with claws and throw it out of the locomotive. And cramped in the cockpit. Nastya with a gun, and they seem to be around her. It's good to hide behind the name of Comrade Stalin. But how many of these are roaming around Russia, hiding behind the name of the great leader.

- In the name of Comrade Stalin ... - and the breath breaks. And they hear what's breaking. The girl is worried. Excitement - a sign of insecurity.

- I command! Don't yell. Keep quiet. Raise couples. Now we're going. Where we go? Let's go ahead. Burn folders from this bag. Just tremble - I'll shoot to hell.

Nothing to do. Reluctantly, lazily, the stoker scooped up some coal and threw it into the furnace. - More, bastard, take it! Dig deeper, throw further! Throw further! And then I'll seal my head! Another threw a folder with the inscription "Dragon" into the firebox. And one more. - Faster. I also dropped the folder. And coal flew into the furnace. And further. And a couple more folders.

The third, with claws, which, the main one, smiles. A bad smile. - Do you have a real gun? - and pulled the claws to the pistol. And Nastya can't shoot yet. It is forbidden. While the locomotive is standing. For now... But what to do? She pressed lightly on the trigger, the gun and slammed. Burnt shoulder chief. Not in the chest the Firebird to him, so as not to death. The Luger bullet has a good stopping power. And repulsive. Threw the chief aside, he sank down and fell out of the booth. - Forward! The second uncle threw the key, grabbed the levers, pulled what he should, gave steam to the cylinders. Checked the wheels. The train jerked. The bumpers clanged, and the clanging rolled from the first carriage to the last.

The locomotive exhaled with a whistle a ton of steam and again seemed to sigh, and exhaled with noise. Again the train jerked, and again the clanging rolled towards the end of the train. The train moved slowly. A red

muzzle peers into the locomotive booth. Himself on the ground, only the face is visible and the bayonet. At the level of Nastya's legs, the muzzle, but unexpectedly grabbed the handrails and climbs higher and higher:

– Where? Where?! Fuck yours! It

would be possible to grab hold of the handrails and kick the red muzzle out of the frame with your foot. But the Firebird understands in a split second that grasping the handrails with his hands is a waste of time. To grab the handrails with your hands means to lower the gun, then raise your knee to your chin and chop with your foot down. All this time is needed. She doesn't have time. And she is not alone in the booth.

She understands all this not with her mind, but with an inner feeling. And therefore it is the opposite for her: first she executes the decision, then she accepts it, and only after that she substantiates it. As soon as the red-haired man with a bayonet climbed into the booth, grabbing the handrails, Nastya, without looking at him, without aiming, without being distracted from controlling the stoker and driver, raised the Luger and pulled the trigger. A shot rang out, the cartridge case was thrown out of the chamber, the cartridge case clanged against the iron booth and got lost in lumps of coal, in the garbage on the floor. And only then did Nastya realize that the only right decision was to shoot. Shoot without talking and right in the muzzle. Between the eyes. Not aiming.

The assistant engineer and the stoker instantly realized that they weren't joking here: the shovel went flickering, the coal flies into the furnace as if Comrade Stakhanov himself was working hard here, overfulfilling the norms, surprising the world with record coal production. Steam locomotive exhalations more and more often. Uh-uh, and again uh-uh. Then uh-uh-uh. More and more speed. There are fewer folders in the bag. So the last one flew into the furnace with coal.

On the locomotive, the order is revolutionary. Pret locomotive. Nastya knows: the path to the steam locomotive is blocked ahead with iron gates. And a guard at the gate with a machine gun, with dogs. It's the only thing she cares about so far. Behind the locomotive tender is a wagon. Not simple, but with a brake pad. Here is the main concern. Because there is security at the brake pad. She also understands this not with her mind, but with an inner feeling. So be it must.

This is true. And from the brake pad another red muzzle peeked out through the coal tender: where are we rolling outside of the schedule, and what kind of shooting is this? The

muzzle looked and disappeared. Only the bayonet sticks out. Nastya is waiting on a coal heap. The muzzle peeked out. And she is baba! The muzzle is hidden. And the rifle with the bayonet crashed and flew out into the black night.

But he's not the only one there. There should be two.

The Firebird threw a piece of coal there. She jumped up on a pile of coal herself and there into the braking area twice: bang, bang. And above her the shovel whistles.

Nastya jumped back from the place where she stood, slid to the side and falls. And in the fall, the Luger points and shoots. In a terrible uncle with a shovel. The stoker roared. From all sides - shooting. The stoker fell on her. There is blood in his throat.

The Firebird escaped from under the dead stoker. She put one bullet in his face, and a dozen holes in his back. And then the locomotive crashed into the gate. If Nastya had

had time to stand up, then upon impact, her inertia would have carried her forward and thrown her onto levers, pipes, pressure gauges, onto an open firebox. But Nastya did not have time to get up, and therefore at the moment of impact she was thrown up on the corner, she lost consciousness for a moment, therefore she did not hear either a roar or a rattle. The body was waiting for her to fall into the abyss, but the train stayed on the rails. The Firebird opened her eyes: sort of like in a new world. The whole situation needs to be reassessed.

She grabbed it all at once, without even having time to express it in words. The locomotive knocks on the rails - it means that it broke the gate and did not derail itself. Something creaks. These are fragments of gates and pieces of barbed wire dragging along the ground. She is alive, too. She fired at the guards on the brake pad from a pile of coal. The stoker at this time swung a shovel at her. And I would have killed. But Nastya shot him in the face, and at the same time the guards at the gate riddled the entire locomotive booth with bullets, at the same time riddling the assistant driver and fireman. The stoker fell on her, shielding her from bullets.

Darkness. The train carries into the darkness. Into the darkness This is also understandable: fragments of the gate smashed the searchlight and the locomotive lanterns. Only the firebox illuminates the interior of the locomotive cabin with hellish light.

One Nastya in the cabin of a locomotive. The steam locomotive went berserk. Exhales vigorously, like a sprinter at a distance. Which lever to pull? For this one? Terrible levers: if you pull the wrong one, the boiler will explode. The arrows on the pressure gauges and so rested against the edges of the scales. And the speed is higher and higher. And the rhythm is wheeled, just like the dance of death among the cannibals of the Tumbu

Yumbu tribe. I can not see anything. You can only hear: they are running on the roofs. Figured the Firebird. She had two full stores. Two stores of eight. Sixteen rounds. How much is left? How many guards are at the brake pads? And where are they running? And is the train empty? Maybe he's full of convicts? Sure, it's been beaten. In the evening, the train was driven into the execution zone. At four in the morning they planned to unload. And in groups of fifty - to the cabinets. Clearly, the train is full. Otherwise, they would not have guarded it, empty. Definitely: in the echelon - sentenced to death. These are the builders of the underground city in Zhiguli. Worn-out builders.

Rushing echelon into the darkness and seems to sway slightly. And like the roar of the surf Nastya hears. The train is rocking harder and harder. Even in a steam locomotive, the rocking is palpable. From side to side. From side to side. And roar: wow! To the left suffered: wow! Right: wow!

Anna Ivanovna, an intelligent teacher who had delayed the full term, told me that there was such a trick to get away from execution. If people understand that they are being taken to their deaths, and if they are being taken not in Stolypins, but in rubella [3], then there is a chance to free themselves. Not everyone. Everyone, how many people there are in the freight car, scatter and fall on the wall: wow! They scatter and fall on another: wow! And the song is yelled: "We will die!" Her chorus: wow!

At first, pushes left and right do not affect the car in any way. Prisoners are skinny, weak people, and the car is multi-ton. But even steel wagons submit to human perseverance. And locomotives. Slowly, the car begins to rock. Right. Left. Right: wow! Left: wow! The more speed, the better.

The convoy, having caught the rhythm, it is better to jump from the brake pads. There is nothing you can do to help here: if the guards caught the swaying rhythm, then the prisoners in other cars caught it. And they supported. Pathos

suicidal release through closed wagons, as if by a Fickford cord. And along the echelon they yell a song: "We will die!" And in all the cars they rush to the walls in a single impulse, in a single rhythm.

Before death, liberation comes to a person. It remains for a person to live for a few minutes, but he understands that he is already dead, that he can no longer dodge death, and here it is now ... It is at this moment that a person becomes free. He stops being afraid. He has nothing more to fear! And the

freedom is not in the fact that one of them, perhaps, will not break his neck, but in the fact that people are not afraid of death and in general are not afraid of anything. One has only to give up this sticky, vile fear of death, and a person is free. If you are not afraid of death, then everything else is

not scary. And what, you ask, is afraid of her? One hell, we all die. And just before death, people realize that they have been afraid in vain all their lives. To renounce fear a long time ago, a completely different life would be ...

The echelon groans, groans, sways: to the right, to the left, to the right, to the left ... Uhh, uhh, uhh ... Nastya found out: this is exactly that rumble, this is exactly that deadly swaying. Few people get out of the disaster alive. Maybe no one. Who knows what slope to fly? Who knows on which rocks the wagons will fall, in which river they will drown? And now death will take all. In the meantime, freedom rejoices in locked cars. In the meantime, people are yelling and rushing from wall to wall in suicidal merriment, in dying delight. The rhythm grows like a shaman's dance. More and more often.

And the guards on the roofs of the wagons no longer shoot at Nastya. Not before her. For those who remained on the brake pads, at least not jump high. And for those who climbed

onto the roofs, what is it like for them? And Nastya is fine. She, too, is in a suicidal rhythm. She's having fun too. Those in the wagons have no way out. Doors are locked, windows are barred. And she has the ability to jump. I just don't want to get out of the rhythm: wow! uhh! Right. Left. Right. Left. At any moment there will come a resonance, a coincidence of amplitudes, and we will fly all up with wheels. Let's fly to death.

The last thought in the head of the Firebird: should I throw "Control Block" into the furnace? If you throw it, the contacts will melt, and you will get an ingot of gold and steel. No one can take advantage of them, and let them get out themselves, as they know. And let them share power as best they can.

And one more thought: why don't I jump if there is an opportunity? She reproached herself: too, Firebird, you are carried away by death. "Control-block" can be saved. You can deliver Comrade Stalin and earn another Order of Lenin ... or a bullet in the back of the head.

It is difficult for her to return from a suicidal rhythm, it is as difficult as leaving good friends forever. Reset the speed of the locomotive. Nastya pulled one lever, the other - no use. Down the stairs. And already the locomotive is swinging in the general rhythm.

Not with this amplitude, like wagons, but soon it will swing like them. Bag over the shoulders, hands behind the head - and down the slope.

And sharp stones, and the Luger on her side, and the Control Block behind her back, and the branches of evil trees, and the whistle of the wind - everything fell upon her at once. A paratrooper paratrooper, a sambo wrestler, she knows that it is necessary to curl up with a ball, to group. Wrestlers say about this position: so that nothing sticks out.

So the Firebird did. It flies into the darkness, shrinking into a lump. And immediately my mouth filled with hot blood. And Nastya rolls downhill, and sees a terrible black train above her. The train rumbles with steel, screams with human cries. And do not understand, she is flying alone down a slope, somersaulting, or a locomotive with wagons, with screaming people is flying with her ... Do not understand.

There is no worse pain than the pain of returning to life.

Nastya lies face down. All to the last cell is woven from pain, all overflowing with joyful expectation of a liberating death. Now death will approach, barely touching, kiss, Nastya will smile at her with a quiet smile. And take her death with him.

This sweet expectation is familiar to her: the parachute slammed over head and here - the earth. And you wait...

But then death did not come. She's not there this time either. Instead of death, life returns. And that's the worst. This is how it

happens in the life of a people: for a thousand years it has been climbing up, up, up. And tired of climbing, breaking nails and suffocating. Tired. The people stopped. And you can stay at a height - climbing. The people stopped and slipped. Slipped and broke. And it's so good to fly down: no stress, no need to do anything, you fly, the air is fresh, you don't need to think, you don't need to worry about anything. And everyone can see: the people are on the move. With acceleration. It's whistling in your ears. Then a blow. For some peoples, the blow is fatal. And people disappear. But

some do not

die and disappear. And monstrous pain, which is worse than death, overwhelms the body and soul of the people. And the people are aware: the arms and legs are broken, perhaps the spine and neck, everything is covered in blood, everything is saturated with pain. And the pain is excruciating. And voices are heard: how good it was to fall! And there is an opportunity to continue the fall: around the abyss, and there, behind the cornice, bottomless emptiness, only slip off ... The pain is unbearable. Climb again? A thousand years? And I want to fall into the abyss. Terribly life returned to her body. It would be better not to return. The head is buzzing like a bell, cast-iron hammers are crushing the spine.

She moved her hand and screamed. She cursed the life into which an evil fate returns her. And I decided never to regret life. Neither his own, nor someone else's. And meet death with a gentle smile, whenever death befalls her, now or later, whatever death befalls her: in dog teeth or in the sawdust of a firing cellar. It would be better soon. Better right now. But death walks close, not noticing Nastya. Somewhere nearby, a train was flying up with its wheels. That's where death feasts now. Somewhere nearby, Chekists with dogs are prowling, finishing off those who got out from under the broken cars. But they are

looking for Nastya. Not even her, but "Control-block".

They don't know why. They were ordered. They were ordered by Bocharov. For Bocharov, getting "Control-block" is a matter of life and death. And for Yezhov. And for Frinovsky. And for Berman. So not over one Nastya death

spread its wings. And for Comrade Stalin, wresting the Control Block from the clutches of the NKVD is a matter of life and death. To disconnect Stalin from communications is to disconnect him from power. Cut off communications and send orders from the Stalinist name ...

It is not clear why death does not come. Is it difficult for Bocharov to guess that Nastya could jump out earlier, and now lies somewhere near the embankment? Is it hard to find and kill? Quietly quite

Nastya called death. Death answered with the barking of a pack of Chekist dogs. Answered directly from the embankment.

But it didn't fit.

7

Fierce and terrible senior major of state security Bocharov. If he had hair on his neck, that hair would stand on end now. And his gaze is not straight, but seems to be slightly slanted, as if he is looking at everything behind his back, as if, without barking or roaring, he will now bite his teeth into the throat of someone invisible behind his back. The same immobility in him that dogs have at the very last moment before a violent throw.

Chapter 24

1

Nastya does not know how long she lay without moving. Maybe a minute. Maybe an hour. Maybe a day. Her brain works clearly and precisely. As always. But time does not notice. Time simply doesn't exist. More precisely, Nastya exists outside of time. It cannot be said that she lives. Does not live, but wanders between pain and eternity. Again

she cursed life and vowed to herself not to spare life when she was being killed. It never occurred to her that she could die quietly, calmly. She knew that she would be hacked to death with an axe. I knew that they would raise a knife. She knew that one day she would be shot in the back of the head. She couldn't imagine any other possibility. It was the very limit beyond which her imagination did not go. And here she felt like Stalin's younger sister. He couldn't die himself either. At night, Nastya clearly saw the muzzle of a terrorist who was shooting at Comrade Stalin, the hand of his closest friend, who was pouring powder into a glass of water.

pours ...

It is clear to her why death does not suit her: she was thrown from a stone mound to a forest lake, and her body lies not on sharp dry stones, but in soft cold moisture. She reached out her hand and dipped her palm into the clear water. Scooped up water. Splashed in the face. More. Pulled up to the water. She dipped her face into the water. She raised her head. I drank some water. Where is the Control Block? Here he is. Behind the back. In a bag. Didn't break? Does something like this break? Throw such a piece of iron even from an airplane. Maybe he saved her life by

covering her back with an armored plate. I tried to get up. It didn't work out. Creeped. Slipped into the water. October water burned like nettles. But trained Nastya. It's easier in the water. Ice compress. I swam. I dived to make my head

easier. Resurfaced. Small lake. On the chest, on the neck. Sometimes silt underfoot, sometimes snags. Reeds along the banks. The chain goes along the embankment. Combing. Again with dogs.

The big black dog stopped where she had just been. I sniffed. Went ahead. Has stopped. Looked around. Returned. Still sniffed. Twilight. Nastya doesn't know: it's twilight
because it's getting dark, or
because it is dawning.
The dog ran on.

2

Bocharov's subordinates keep aloof. They try not to catch the eye. Because it shoots. He shoots because he needs to shoot someone now.

But someone should go to report to him. They're coming.

3

The simplest science is tactics. You need to imagine yourself in the place of the enemy and try to understand what actions he expects from you. And do the exact opposite. Do what he does not expect. That's all tactics.

It's bad for Nastya at all. You need to take your mind off the pain. Need about something think. Nastya thinks about Bocharov. I imagined myself in his place.

4

They reported to Bocharov: the engine driver was wounded, but alive. He said: a girl in trousers, with a pistol, with a foreign bag climbed into the locomotive. In the firebox of a locomotive folder burned. How many folders? Ten fifteen. And she shot, bastard, hitting anyone. I got mad. Eyes like a witch.

5

There is only one salvation for Nastya: go to Stalin. But now Bocharov will set up ambushes and cordons on the roads. And in all villages. At all stations and marinas. Bocharov will notify all post offices, telegraph and telephone stations. Nastya has no way to contact Stalin. There is no radio station, but the telephone, telegraph, and in general all communication systems are known in whose hands.

6

They also reported to Bocharov: the train, breaking through the gate, traveled nine kilometers and derailed. The cause of the crash is not clear. The railway track in the disaster area was damaged, but this is not the cause of the disaster: the train crash did not happen because the track was damaged, but the track was damaged because the train turned over and flew down a slope. A damaged path is not the cause of the disaster, but

consequence. The cause of the crash has not yet been determined. One hundred and thirty-two disfigured corpses have been recovered from the rubble. Is there a female corpse? No, there is no female. But work continues. Under the rubble, there are obviously more corpses. Nineteen wounded were found in the disaster area and finished off. There is an assumption that at least forty prisoners with minor injuries and bruises managed to escape in different directions. Search and pursuit organized.

Silently Bocharov listens to the reports. He examined the church himself. The safe has been opened. Not hacked, but opened. Opened clean. Professionalism beyond the realm of possibility. Bocharov saw a lot of opened and cracked safes in his lifetime, but he never saw such clean work. On duty, the senior major of state security Bocharov knows the best safecrackers of the country by handwriting. Went over all in memory. There is no such master in the Union now. Gnawed off his head: over the past ten or fifteen years, no one in the Union has opened up a bear so cleanly. Clearly, this is not the Firebird worked. He worked as a professional of the highest caliber. But where did he come from? The old classical school bugbears have all been wiped out, they have died out like dinosaurs. More precisely, they exterminated them, like wolves in Germany, like ermines in Rus'. In the future they will appear again, but for the moment,

years, they were, albeit temporarily, but exhausted. It seems that the great safecracker from the past emerged, opened the safe and went back to the past again.

Gutalin himself is an urka. The Tiflis treasury with partners smoked. The whole of Europe would be delighted if they knew how Comrade Stalin robbed banks. Whatever he undertakes, he succeeds. Gutalin is clearly not indifferent to the skill of opening safes. Maybe somewhere Gutalin kept a top-class safecracker for such an occasion?

And how did that bear cub get through to the special stage? And where did it go? There was once a legendary Sevastyan in Rus', so he has been gone for a long time. Disappeared in Civil. But Sevastyan alone could have worked. No one else.

But Sevastyan behaved strangely. In the safe, the collection of orders was not touched, diamonds, coins, ingots and nuggets were not touched. Sevastyan would put even a handful of diamonds in his pocket.

But the main thing is gone. The folders for Gutalin and the Dragon disappeared. Missing control block. Without it, the twenty-seven-carat blue diamond Bocharov is not happy.

Bocharov is sitting, thinking. The driver assures that she was alone in the locomotive. And where is the bear cub that poked through the safe? To hell with him, with the bear cub. She had folders with her and something heavy in a bag. And she went into the forest with a light bag. Therefore, all forces are only on finding a girl. Where can she go? Might go east. From somewhere in the Urals, a plane can call, and they will take her away. Might go west. But to the west is the Volga. The Volga must be crossed. In October there are no fools to swim across the Volga. And all berths, marinas, all boats - under control! There is only one bridge across the Volga. Railway. Bridge and so under full control. She can't cross the bridge. There is also a railway bridge near Ulyanovsk - it is one hundred and fifty kilometers upstream. And the railway bridge near Saratov. It's three hundred kilometers downstream. But all bridges are under control. You can't cross the railway bridge and you can't pass by train. All trains are checked.

Bocharov had only heard out of the corner of his ear for a long time that it seemed that Gutalin had some kind of railway traffic system. Some trains run all over the country according to some secret schedules. If the Firebird is privy to this secret, if he knows some station and

the time when the Stalinist train stops there, they will pick her up and take her away.

Are all routes under control? It would be nice. But very country great.

7

The Firebird figured: there is no road along the railway track. And there are no roads at all. Cars won't get through. They don't have another ship. And ten kilometers on foot is not a short distance. Checking the entire line from the special stage to the crash site is not easy. Nastya can lie under the rubble of the broken train. Could burn. And she could jump. Moreover, she could jump right after the locomotive broke through the gates of the special stage. Around the forest and swamps. She could go far, she could grab a horse, a bicycle, a car, she could go onto a railway line and jump into a passing train.

In addition, Bocharov knows that Nastya is what she is, but still a saboteur: clothes and shoes are impregnated with the composition of "TK", a person does not catch the smell of "TK", and this smell is like a hammer to the dog's nose. In general, if you put yourself in the place of Bocharov, then the task is not so easy. In addition, prisoners could have survived in the crashed train. Those who survived run away. How many of them is unknown. They can steal food, clothes, horses, cars, weapons in the district, attack people. Now reports will be pouring in from the districts - go and figure out where to throw your forces.

Nastya is sitting, thinking. Bocharov could call Yezhov, and then all the NKVD was against her. Then all stations, all airfields are under control. Then all the telegraph and telephone stations are waiting for her to appear. And they won't miss it. She will be caught as soon as she tries to call or send a telegram. On the other side of the Volga, at the 913th kilometer junction, every Saturday from midnight to midday there is a Glavspetsremstroy repair train. How to cross the Volga? Comrade Stalin has many trains of ghosts, they run regularly, there are many secret places around the country where they

stop. But Nastya is entrusted with only a small piece of secret: only one trip. And he's on the other side. On the right.

Chapter 25

1

Kuibyshev department of the NKVD - combat alert. Operational situation: in the area of the special stage of the NKVD, wreckers deliberately damaged the railway track. On the damaged section of the track, a special train with dangerous criminals, who were transported to execution, crashed. At least forty criminals managed to escape. Among them is a particularly dangerous bear cub Firebird, a participant in a number of mass atrocities. Signs: age 19; height 157 centimeters; correct athletic physique, some lack of weight; straight nose; blue eyes, large; Oval face; hair is blond, thick; short haircut; dressed in a black men's suit of a sports-tourist type; shod in black high leather boots of an unusual shape with thick soles, the pattern of the sole and heel is fully consistent with the pattern of the Soviet army officer's boot; has with him a duffel bag of a foreign sample; armed with a Luger pistol "Parabellum 08" and a German hunting knife "Solingen"; extremely dangerous. At a meeting - exterminate on the spot. Report immediately.

2

But what should the head of the Kuibyshev department of the NKVD, senior major of state security Bocharov, now report to Comrade Yezhov in Moscow? Report that Gutralin sniffed something out and sent the girl for reconnaissance? Report this to Yezhov - he will be frightened, he will run to Gutralin to ask for forgiveness. Or report that the girl sniffed out where the Control Block was and stole it?

Or, perhaps, report to Yezhov that the echelon with those sentenced to death was already at the special stage, but was hijacked by a girl and crashed, while half of the condemned fled? Seven troubles - one answer. We need to start a revolution. Urgently. And to Yezhov a cipher: a train with those sentenced to death crashed on the way to the special stage, the train was especially dangerous ... And now ciphers from Moscow flew across the country: "To the heads of the NKVD departments of Yaroslavl, Kostroma, Gorky, Saratov, Penza, Stalingrad, Perm, Kirov ... blue eyes, large; oval face ... exterminate ... Yezhov.

3

Comrade Stalin is leafing through reports of Moscow rumors. All about one thing: a gang showed up in Siberia. Forty people. All killers. All are sentenced to death.

They shoot at anyone. The gang is called "Bird of Death". At the head is a girl of unprecedented beauty. The eyes are blue and large. The gang makes its way to Moscow, but the NKVD does not sleep: all bridges across the Volga are blocked, all river vessels are under control, there is an ambush at every boat station, and patrols with dogs at

every pier. Comrade Stalin picked up the

phone: - Comrade Yezhov, can't you neutralize the gang?

- Comrade Stalin, the entire NKVD and the army have been raised to their feet. Be sure to find and destroy on the spot. Special instructions are given in relation to the chieftain. We will exterminate, Comrade Stalin.

4

Nastya swims in inky blackness. Scary. It was said that pikes on the Volga are worse than sharks. Two meters long. This is how much one needs in the belly every day! If he bites off his leg, here's your dinner. They also talked about cannibal catfish. Those lie in deep pits. At night, they rise to the surface and grab swimmers. Catfish five meters

come and weigh three hundred kilograms. There are also Belugas. Those are also five meters long, only weighing not three hundred kilograms, but a ton. Belugas live for a hundred years or more. And they eat a lot ... The only difference is that they bite off not one leg, but two at once.

5

Senior Major of State Security Bocharov scolds himself: how close he was to victory! You should have just taken this girl with you on the very first evening.

Take with you. What a slender, what a graceful girl! Where else in Rus' can you find such a thing? She is built to dance, she is born to dance. She suppresses her dancing instinct. She had to be taken with her, and she would not have resisted. And I would dance. And I would forget all my special assignments. And she would tell him why Comrade Stalin sent her. But Bocharov did not take her with him. And so she disappeared. Disappeared, having stolen the "Control-block" and folders on Gutalin and the Dragon. How could she figure out where all this was kept? How could she open the safe?

And when? Gone. Fell through the ground. Or through water. And then they reported to Bocharov: the fishermen caught a duffel bag of an unusual design. On a duffel bag, which obviously costs more than a fishing boat, there are enemy letters. The bag was identified by the personnel of the special stage. With such a bag of enemy production, only the Firebird appeared in these parts.

And Bocharov understood: a balance had come. She drowned. "Control block" floats worse than an ax. The ax is steel, and here is gold, a heavy metal. Stalin cannot take control of the communications system, but neither can Bocharov. Game continues.

6

Nastya imagines a mustachioed catfish right under her. And she works with her hands with all her might. And the cold does not take her yet - trained. Now, if someone covered the bottom with a steel grate from scary fish, then

then nothing. Or would she have long legs, like a water strider beetle, to glide through the water, but not fall into the water. The Firebird swims, holding on to a log. A log so that the "Control-block" does not pull under water. Floats, does not lose direction. Direction to the white buoy. The buoy shines ahead as a guiding star. Simple plan: swim to the buoy and wait for the caravan. Caravans roam the Volga: a tugboat and six or eight barges on a hook. The caravan moves slowly against the current. Especially if loaded. The laden boards are low. It is necessary to figure out in the dark whether the caravan is loaded or not. If the barges are empty, you can't climb on board, you'll grab on until the next barge covers you. We must swim to the very last. All this is good in theory. You can't see anything in the dark. Nastya hopes for luck. There is

nothing more to hope for. She does exactly what is not expected of her. The plan: to swim out at night to the Volga fairway, climb on a barge and climb on it for two hundred kilometers upstream, there - into the water and to the right bank, then go down the right bank along the Volga. to Alexander Bridge. Until the 913th kilometer. A passenger steamer passed downstream. The music is booming. Above the Volga wave - "Amur waves". But the decks are empty. Probably

the cabins are half empty. The season ends. Nastya is sitting on the buoy, only the waves shook her. A caravan splashed up: a tugboat and six barges. Nastya was about to swim towards them, sailed far into the fairway, but returned. The stench of gasoline from

barges for a kilometer. Some kind of oil stuff is being driven from Baku by the Caspian to Astrakhan, then by the Volga to the north, to the north, to the north. There is nothing to do on oil barges - there is nowhere to hide. Another passenger ship passed. Now upstream. Also with music: here - "Slavyanochka". You can't keep up with the passenger, even if it goes against the current.

Here is the tug slapping its wheels. Slaps in the right direction. Nastya slipped from the buoy into the water - and onto the fairway. Slowly the tug goes against the current, but she can swim to the middle of the fairway. Waves rock her. The rain spreads with water dust. No drops. To have time to swim until the caravan passes by. And there is little sense in pushing forward - you will fall under the wheels. Wow, how it spins! And do not understand in the water

swam far or not very far. It seems that it floats for days, and when you turn around, the buoy is nearby, it seems that it has not sailed away from it yet.

She was lucky. In general, they say that a good person is always lucky. But is it bad for us? She caught on the splintered side, pulled herself up, climbed up. Next to the side is a huge fish from under the water with its mouth - hap. And thrashed her tail like an oar. What is the

barge loaded with? Barges with Astrakhan watermelons have already passed. In September. This caravan with grain turned out to be. Six barges in pairs. You can't think of a better one. Don wheat goes to the Stalingrad elevators, and from there - up the Volga to the north, to the north, to the north. Canals and rivers to Moscow itself, to St. Petersburg, to Murmansk, to Arkhangelsk. Hills of grain. Covered with tarpaulins.

The Firebird dived under the tarpaulin. The stuffiness and heat are terrible. There should be hollows between the hills of grain. Exactly. There are hollows, wheat on all sides, a tarpaulin awning on top, almost like over leaders during an air parade. Nastya first of all shook off the

water from the pistol. Wipe would be, but nothing. All clothes are saturated with kilograms of water. She squeezed out the clothes, laid them out on the grain under the awning. She poured water out of her boots and onto their feet. Let your feet dry. Otherwise, they will warp, then they won't be able to stand on their feet. you pull.

Nastya made a bed for herself. It rows, and the grain is hot, incandescent by the sun, which has not yet given off the warmth of its northern autumn. Stretched out - stretched out. She covered herself with grain. All tremble. Teeth chattering like a young pike.

A tugboat pulls six barges, slapping the water with its wheels. Waves crash on board. The rain is dripping on the awning. No way the Firebird will get warm. The wind is getting stronger, the waves are hitting the sides more strongly. And it's good that you did. Maybe in an hour such waves will rise on the Volga that you won't even reach the buoy, such rain will hit that you won't see the lights.

And lucky. A barge with bricks could be. Or with rails. And good for grain. Little by little the trembling subsides. I wonder what Bocharov thinks about her now? Swimming across the Volga at night in October, to cling to a passing steamer and go north? Bocharov does not think of such a thing. And she smiled to herself: oh yes, the Firebird!

Chapter 26

1

Nastya dreamed of executions. And she thought in her sleep: who will be responsible for the executions? Will the executioners answer? And is she an executioner herself? For some reason, in a dream, she called the people who carry out the sentences executioners. This is the wrong term. And in a dream, she realized that it was wrong. Not an executioner, but a performer. It is they who have executioners there, among the enemies. And for us it is an honorable and even romantic profession - a performer. She

understood that she was sleeping, she understood that in a dream the human brain works, but thoughts get confused, and therefore, instead of a clear, understandable term, she uses an incomprehensible, vague, insulting one.

So, is she an executioner herself? She is funny in her sleep. What kind of executioner is she? An executioner is someone who is regular. And she just fluttered around this case. It is important that Bocharov introduced herself: know ours, I am also a performer. Even the most ashamed. Bocharov in his life shot the corpses of the Egyptian pyramids, and Nastya ... The performer is called ... Of course, I would like to take this matter seriously, but, you know, it's not fate. In the monastery, executions rarely, rarely happen, and they shoot little by little. So she has nothing to be personally responsible for.

And the other real executioners? Will they answer? The question is, what are they responsible for? Did they come up with a world revolution, social justice and the destruction of classes, without which there can be no justice? Therefore, there is nothing for the executioners to answer for. They were just following orders. But will those who invented the world revolution and social justice be condemned, even after death? But that and even more so there is nothing to answer for. They didn't personally kill anyone. And her brain, accustomed to formulating

ideas, clearly deduced the formula:

"Theorists have clean hands, performers have a clean conscience."

She immediately forgot this formula. Her brain found what it needed excuse, calm came, and the executions were no longer dreamed of.

The body fell asleep. The mind didn't sleep. The brain continues to work. Only the brain of a sleeping person is free. Only the shackles have been removed. Shakes barges on the Volga wave. The rain rumbles on the tarpaulin like a tank column on cobblestones.

Light. She peeked out from under the tarp. Cold. Damp. Nauseous. The tugboat slaps the wheels on the water, as if the coachman is singing a boring song. The waves are cold. Breaks all Nastya. The body is on fire. Morning. On the left side of the board there should be a Zhiguli. No Zhiguli. On the left side of the grove and ravines. The tug with barges could not have gone so far. Or maybe Nastya didn't sleep the rest of the night, but another whole

day? Maybe she got sick? When she climbed onto the barge, did she forget to put a log on board? Where is the lumberjack? Here it is. Without it, you can't swim to the shore with a heavy piece of iron.

Carefully climbed down from the side. Feet in the water. In October the water Mother Volga is warm. If it hasn't hardened, it means it's warm.

It only seemed to Nastya that the water hissed. It appeared that her hot, and scalded with boiling water.

She floated for a minute, holding on to the clumsy wooden board. And she let him go. Nastya rocked on the wave. The barge went next, went, went on. And Nastya the Firebird swam to the right bank. To the ravines. To landslides. To the groves. To desolate fields. She felt the

shallows with her feet, got up, wandered to the shore for a long time. Got out. The solution is ready: do not carry the "Control-block" with you. You won't deliver. Heavy. Barely sailed with him. If you get caught with him, then it will be bad for everyone.

Even when I was sailing to the shore, I saw the wreckage of the barge. Nobody around. The skeleton of the barge is cut into the shore and half covered with sand. The sides are tarred, they will never rot. A broken barge has been lying here for forty years. So, there will be so much more. The barge is a landmark. It is easy to describe in words: on the right bank of the Volga, up from the Zhiguli, under a sandy slope, on the slope there are two birch trees. Whoever needs it will find it. Whoever needs it will overturn all the broken barges on the right bank of the Volga.

The Firebird pulled a sling out of the bag, dived under the keel, tied the end of the sling behind the fragments of the rudder, emerged, with the other end

I tied the control-block with a double cross and threw it further into the water. He splashed the block, like a Volga cannibal catfish.

Now get on the road. I checked what was in the bag. In the bag - a dry ration of a saboteur. She chuckled: a paratrooper armed with dry rations is practically immortal. I remembered: a day in the forest, a night and a day in the church, it is not yet clear how long it is at the railway embankment and on the barge, and hunger is not felt at all. Marvelous. Now she needs to calculate the food supply for the coming days. This is an equation with many unknowns. It is not known how long she slept in the barge, and therefore it is not clear how far she is from the 913th kilometer siding. And if you reach the 913th kilometer, it is not clear how many days you have to wait there. "Glavspetsremstroy" at the 913th kilometer happens on Saturdays, but today it is not known what day. Let's say that in three days it will reach the 913th

kilometer, but how long will it take to wait there? Maybe she will come there, and Glavspetsremstroy is waiting for her. This is one situation. Another: it will reach the 913th kilometer, but the repair train will not be there. Maybe he just left. Then wait a week. Then the products should be divided in a completely different way. In this problem, only the number of products is a known quantity. She has in stock: two one-hundred-gram chocolate bars from the Swiss company Nestle, two two-hundred-gram cans of stew, one hundred-gram can of condensed milk, a can of Canadian salmon - 212 grams, a twenty-gram bag of coffee, also Nestle, five non-wetting matches, two tablets of dry alcohol. You can eat the stew like this, or you can warm it up on the fire from the pill without making a fire. You can also brew coffee on a tablet of dry alcohol.

Nastya imagined how coffee would gurgle in a pot. With both hands she will take the pot and will drink, warming her hands with warmth and burning her lips. I felt the aroma, and suddenly the smell of coffee became unbearable to her. The package has not yet been opened and does not smell of anything yet, but she imagined

how terrible it would be. Without hesitation, she threw the package into the Volga. Stew? Stew right there. And condensed milk. A jar of salmon in a wave - fish are supposed to swim in the water. There is chocolate left. You can barely smell it through the packaging. What if you open it? It will be unbearable.

Chocolate - to the Volga. Now deal with the rest of the property. Discard everything that is not needed. Throw the bag. Into his water. Swim. Maybe to Bocharov

swim. It was possible to fill a bag with sand and drown it, but such an idea did not come into her hot head. Matches are no longer needed, as are alcohol tablets. What a nasty smell the pills have. Matches are even worse. Pistol on the side.

There are seven rounds left in the magazine. The second store is empty. Finding ammunition for the Luger in the Volga steppe is not likely. Therefore, an empty store is a gift to the Volga. How disgusting the gun smells! She had never noticed it before. But it turned out that he had so many smells at once - the smell of metal, the plastic sides of the handle have their own separate smell, and gun oil, and soot in the barrel, not cleaned after firing in a steam locomotive. How did she not notice all these smells before? But the Luger cannot be thrown away yet. How to endure it?

3

During her survival training, she worked out the pace: one marathon - a small rest, the second marathon - a big rest, another marathon - a small rest, one more - a big rest. Small rest - hour. Big - five hours with sleep.

But those were other times and other conditions. It is easy for the marathon runners: they run along the roads, and Nastya makes her way through the untrodden terrain: small forests, thorny bushes, swamps, thickets of stinging sedge. It is one thing - on bridges and roads, another - plowing, sand, mud, through slopes and ravines, through hazel and raspberry thickets, through stones, bumps, windbreak. She also needs to navigate, to bypass obstacles, hide, not to catch her eye. And one more thing: how to count kilometers? She accepted the standard - count fifty thousand pairs of steps in one marathon. And she went. Condition: if you lose count, start counting from the very beginning. Better not get lost.

Goes.

If it is somewhere between Kazan and Ulyanovsk, then on the left the Volga flows almost from north to south. It is necessary to have the Volga on the left all the time. About twenty or fifty kilometers to the west, the Sviyaga flows parallel to the Volga. Only in the opposite direction - from south to north. Nastya presents the card well. Once upon a time at school in a geography exam

she answered three questions, and her teacher answered an additional one: "Name the tributaries of the Volga." "And I'll draw for you," he replies. She took the chalk and drew a wavy line in the shape of a question mark on the blackboard from top to bottom. I put a dot at the very beginning - this is the village of Volgoverkhovye. Height above sea level - 228 meters. Here are the lakes Sterzh, Vselug, Penno, Volgo; Oh, I forgot: right there is the Vazuza River, they make vodka from the Vazuza water. Here Gzhat flows into the Vazuza, and the Vazuza at Zubtsov flows into the Volga. Here the Lama flows into the Shosha, and the Shosha into the Volga, here comes Dubna, Medveditsa, Kashinka ... The teachers did not know that the Volga had so many tributaries. So we got to Kama. Draw the tributaries of the Kama? No? And Nastya calls the villages on the right and left, right and left. And the cities... And the depths of the river near the cities and the flow of water in the area of each city. What year was this stock? This is a record - in the spring of 1927. But if you want, Nastya will name the flow in the area of any Volga city in any year, when, of course, there was a record. And the speed of the current on the fairway.

The old teacher looked and looked at Nastya's drawings, and then turned to the examination committee: "But you didn't understand the main thing: she inflicts all the meanders of the rivers quite correctly. Look at the map - here Vazuza went a little to the right, and here a little to the left. So after all, she draws the bends of the rivers from memory exactly as they are drawn on the map ...

"It was a long time ago. The teachers could not understand where Nastya got such knowledge from. But everything was simple: once a neighbor forgot a book in their apartment, some kind of tattered without a cover. All about the Volga. Nastya just had nothing to read. And here is a geographical description of the Volga. I read all 932 pages, and after reading, I remembered them with all the appendices, with all the tables and diagrams, with all the maps, with all the cities and villages along

the banks of the Volga. And now it turned out that there is no superfluous knowledge. Now, according to the outlines of the Volga coast, she determined her location, mentally

calculated the route. And she went. I went with the confidence that I would not get lo

The hands and face are scratched with thorns, the laces are torn, it is easier to pull the foot out of the boot than the boot out of the mud. Day and night. And also day and night. The sun is exactly the ray of the hyperboloid engineer Garin. The ray of the sun is so terrible that it does not blind, but drills into the eyes. Even on the first day, she tore off the edge of the jacket, blindfolded her eyes with a bandage, only cut small slits for her eyes. It still blinds her eyes like electric welding. And my head hurts. And the body is on fire. But she goes. And the

sun is raging like a guard at a firing squad. There has never been such a terrible sun in October. Frankly speaking, this did not happen in August either. Because Nastya tries to go at night. And in the days - if only the forest is ahead. If there is no forest ahead, he rests so that he can walk all night without stopping.

And another day. And another night. Nastya is torn through by a hazel. It wanders through the bushes. He looks back: the mountain that he passed in the morning is still visible in the evening. It seems that over the past ten hours, one hundred kilometers have been left behind, she has given up strength for a thousand kilometers, and if you look at it, you won't get more than ten.

The Firebird knows that it is necessary to distract his thought from the road all the time. Let the legs carry, let the eyes see, but the brain must think about something completely different. About what? About life. He wanders, smiles at his thoughts.

Goes and goes. He remembers his entire past life. And suddenly a discovery. Simple at all. Her life was both good and bad. So, it turns out that she has a choice: you can make your life happy or unhappy. It's as easy as choosing a movie in a government hotel: choose whatever you want - drama, comedy, tragedy, slapstick, adventure, whatever you like. So, if you choose in memory all the good things, then a good life turns out. And if you remember all the bad things, then you get a bad life. It depends on us what our memory chooses from the past. I wanted to turn life into a triumph, just tell yourself: my life is a triumph, and choose in your memory the moments of great accomplishments. If you want happiness in life, remember the moments of happiness. Everyone has something to remember. As everyone retells his past life for himself, so it will be for him. You can turn your life at your own will into whatever you like - into adventures or into a heroic epic.

But if it is so easy to make the past life happy, then why not turn the future life into one bright explosion of happiness? Necessary

just brush aside negative emotions. You just need to not think about the bad. Everything will be fine. You just have to believe that everything will be fine. You just need to let go of the bad memories. It is only necessary not to stain the soul with dreams of revenge, it is necessary to crush the evil memory. We must forgive people for evil. We must forget him. Nastya laughs at herself: has she forgiven many, does she intend to forgive many?

Happy Nastya wanders. Doesn't lose count of steps. Only each step is getting harder. She remembers the number of steps in each marathon, but she does not remember how many marathons she has completed, she does not remember how many days she has been walking. Days and nights are mixed up. The lips are cracked, the skin on the face is very thin. Cheekbones under thin skin appear like a frame. And framed ribs. She does not suffer from hunger. And thirst does not torment. Nastya is surprised. How much energy is given to tearing through hazel and raspberry forests, how many kilometers have been covered, hunger should manifest itself. Doesn't show up. Well, good.

5

Some people think that Stalin's power is the worst thing that has befallen Russia. And they condemn my heroine Nastenka the Firebird for shooting people without spiritual trepidation. I did not describe the

shootings in detail, and completely omitted the descriptions of the interrogations. But it is clear without descriptions: during interrogations, the Firebird was not an idle observer, and during executions, by no means a spectator. Interrogation and

execution - work. Nastya worked during interrogations and executions. Confident and calm. Giving yourself completely to your work. Because Stalin's government did not consider

the worst option. In the monastery, Nastya could freely read even Trotsky, even Bukharin, even Radek. It was not forbidden. Even recommended. And there were photographs of leaders who turned out to be enemies. Nastya often looked at Trotsky. Into the eyes of a portrait.

And once I looked at my hands. Large photo, calm face, free body position, hands on the stomach. And on the fingers - a manicure. Comrade Trotsky's nails are long and well-groomed, like the nails of an aging court beauty.

For some reason, these nails did not give Nastya peace. For some reason, she hated them. Comrade Trotsky suggested liquidating the family and property. He offered to organize everyone into labor armies. Only Comrade Trotsky did not say who would command these labor armies. And somehow the well-groomed fingers of comrade Trotsky and his polished long nails did not fit with the idea of labor armies. Or very much even with this idea knitted. Nastya simply closed her eyes and imagined that there was a labor army ...

Comrade Stalin also has labor armies. They are called briefly and simply - GULAG. Comrade Stalin has very few people in the labor armies. No more than ten percent of the population. And Comrade Trotsky suggested - everyone. Comrade Stalin has labor armies only for re-education. Everyone hopes to return from there. And Comrade Trotsky suggested sending them there forever. Without any hope. And Comrade Stalin does not paint his nails with red varnish. So if Nastya sometimes came across Trotskyists, then she interrogated them with special predilection and shot with special love. She also came across Bukharinites. Comrade Bukharin was a romanticist of the revolution. He proposed to breed a new breed of people. By shooting. Kill the bad ones so that only the good ones remain. Great idea. Only someone will have to decide who to shoot, who to pardon. And it turns out at once a class of people with absolute power. And if the romance of Comrade Bukharin was shot, then it was in accordance with his own idea. He then considered himself good, but go and prove that you are good.

Nastya knew what would happen if Comrade Zinoviev took power, who considered only those structures strong, "under which blood flows." This is how Comrade Zinoviev expressed himself publicly and
printed.

And while Stalin fought against all sorts of Radeks and Kamenevs, a terrible shadow of a capricious, cowardly, narcissistic, pampered, depraved, extremely cruel gentleman by the name of Tukhachevsky quietly rose over Russia. And next to Tukhachevsky is the illiterate Yakir, who flooded the earth with streams of the blood of innocents. Yakir in each area occupied by the communists established the percentage of the civilian population, which was subject to extermination.

And there were many more who tried to make humanity happy through mass shootings. Save

Russia - prevent Tukhachevsky from coming to power - Stalin could only rely on Yezhov. In the struggle against Tukhachevsky, Stalin was forced to give Yezhov almost absolute power. And Comrade Yezhov's head began to spin. And he was drawn to power. He could take her. And what would Russia have expected then? Nastya understood that Russia was lucky. I

understood that Stalin's power was not the worst option. Without this power, millions of jackals, thrown to the crest of the revolution, will tear the country to pieces.

The Firebird understood - it can be worse. She occupied a modest, inconspicuous post, and in this post, like thousands of others, she did everything in human power, and beyond that, to prevent the worst.

Optimists think that life is a struggle between good and evil. Her life was not presented in such a rosy light. She knew that life is a struggle of evil against even greater evil.

6

Nastya is
wandering. South.

South. South. Goes through the groves. Goes stunted copses. Walks the steppe. lies down when someone appears on the horizon.

Head ringing from lack of sleep. Knows: stop - fall asleep. That's why it doesn't stop. Nastya does

not count more steps. I decided to keep walking. Go, go, go. Nastya feels that every day she becomes easier. Almost weightless. One question: if energy is consumed and not replenished in any way, then how will it reach the 913th kilometer? And I decided: on pride.

7

Wandering.

The mirage is half a world ahead of her. Bridge. One end rests on the shore. Others - to the horizon. The passage is deserted. This is the 913th kilometer. On the slope there is an inscription: "Glory to Stalin!"

Rails in the autumn haze. The sun is hot, and the rails are floating on the horizon. And the train on the floating rails trembles and sways. Desired train. Glavspetsremstroy. He comes here on Saturdays. Until twelve o'clock.

Where are they, Saturdays? Nastya lost count of days. And he doesn't know the time. I broke my watch a long time ago, it stopped a long time ago, I left it a long time ago, so that my hand would not be pressed, so as not to drag excess weight. And "Luger" has long abandoned. Even a needle is heavy for a soldier on a campaign. And then there's the Luger. Damn iron. He beat everything on the thigh, pulled him to the bottom in the Volga. To hell with him, iron. Threw - and it's easier to go. Left him a long time ago. It wouldn't have gone that way with him. Wouldn't have passed anyway.

Nastya touched the place on her thigh where the Luger hung, she was surprised: it is still hanging, iron infection. I wanted to quit everything, but I never got around to it. How is it with such a weight for so many kilometers? She surprises herself. And there are no clocks. In the sun, noon emerges. It's a pity, it's easy to determine hours by the sun, but not very minutes. And if you believe the sun, now Glavspetsremstroy will quietly move and roll. And ride. He accelerates quickly. It quickly takes him over the horizon. To hell with it. Is it a pity? Nastya understands that this is not a real bridge, not a real siding, not a real train. She, sick, broken, could not reach the highway. Could not. This is beyond human strength. And she couldn't come out to the siding right at the time when Glavspetsremstroy was standing there. She just wants to get to the highway. I would like to meet the train. I want to get into the car and fall. And sleep. Without waking up. Sleep always. And take off her shoes. She will never wear boots again. Wandering. You have to take it into your own hands. So you have to walk so that the shoes do not cling to one another. They didn't cling... They didn't cling... It may very well be that the bridge and the siding are not a mirage at all. It may very well be that she did. And maybe she was lucky that

she

reached the moment when the train was standing there. Saturday until noon. Or Comrade Stalin

sent Glavspetsremstroy and ordered to wait, and wait, and wait. Wait for her. Wait until the bird arrives. But this

could not be. The train has other things to do. And other similar trains have a lot to do. Look what a country, and all of it must be controlled. Maybe Saturday today. But here's the problem: if she gets to the train, will she have the strength to climb the steps? Will not be enough. What to do then? Knock on the door with your fist. Is it strong enough to knock? Will anyone hear her? Weakened hands. It was once upon a time that she could have brought Master Nikanor in the face. Now the arms hang like the wings of a wounded bird. Funny: a bird dying of Fire. Maybe it's time to quit the Luger? It will become easier. It will be a whole ton lighter. If he misses the train, he will fall by the rails, sleep for ten minutes, return to the field and the Luger will find him. She can't wait until next Saturday. That "Luger" at the very time she will fit. Shoot yourself. And if she gets to the train and has time to get into it, she will tell her to run into the field and the Luger and pick it up. And now it will be easier without him. Easier. It will be quite easy.

The mirage on the horizon does not disappear. It stands "Glavspetsremstroy" as clear as a picture. And I decided to go all the way to the

mirage. And die. In move. Goes. The railroad siding smells like coal. The sleepers smell of their own special smell. They are impregnated with some kind of devilry so that they do not rot. From afar, Nastya smells the railway. Okay, but the pungent smell

makes my head hurt. Goes. Nastya goes and understands that this is not a mirage at all. This is a train. This is Glavspetsremstroy. And not any, namely that one. "Glavspetsremstroy-12". It can be seen from a distance by outlines. Fools think that cars of the same type are all the same. No. They, like people, are all different. Just take a look.

Nastya stumbles. Falls to his knees. But I decided to rearrange my legs so that the shoe would not cling to the shoe. To not get stuck. And the steps are very small. There would be no wider steps to take. Does not work.

She wanders and understands that the senior major of state security Bocharov could have set up an ambush at the railway siding.

Could. Here she wanders, no longer hiding, no longer has the strength to hide, now she wanders with the last of her strength, stumbling, and now they will jump out. And they will seize her at the very train. She wanders, does not

hide. Maybe they will notice from the train? Do not notice. And the Bocharov tigers, of course, see her from an ambush, and jump out. She will have nothing to shoot at them. There was a Luger on its side and seven rounds in it. But Nastya "Luger" threw it away. She has nothing to shoot now. And if there was a Luger, it would have shied into the air now, they would have heard and saved on the train ... The sun is high. Noon. Holovanov spoke: from midnight to noon. What an evil fate: Nastya

would not have come out here at midnight last. In twelve hours from the forest to the junction, I would have made it. And so ... The train will leave. And will be back in a week. Nastya will not live a week.

She walks, waving her hands. He goes and screams. "Don't leave," he screams. Screams and laughs. He screams and realizes that he is not screaming. It's funny: he understands that his lips are caked and cracked. That her lips do not open at all. It only seems to her that she is screaming, but a scream is not born in her dry throat. Nobody sees her. Nastya is walking like a Caucasian prisoner. He ran across the field to his own and shouted: "Brothers! Brothers! But they did not hear, and red-beards jumped out of the forest on horses ... So Nastya goes to her own. True, until they jumped out of the forest on horseback, but the train could leave at any moment. To any. She goes and cries. It's a pity. If it was an hour late, it would not be so pitiful. It's a pity when

didn't last a minute. In the

end, the Firebird grew emaciated. Like an epic. Maybe someone was watching in her direction, but through her only saw a feather grass field.

The sentry at the train. The guard does not see her. It happens at night that sentries are vigilant. And then he stood by the car, turned his back to the autumn sun, and warmed himself. Who can approach from the side of the field? No one can.

Nastya is walking, her feet are on fire. They burn like they're walking on coals. She

reached out her hand and took hold of the railing. Warm handrail warmed up in the sun.

Right knee - on the step. And with the whole body forward. Now pull your left leg up and onto the step with your knees. Now with the right foot

get up on the step. Now left. Orange circles in the eyes. It is necessary to rise not with your feet, but with your hands to grab and reach for the handrails. Right foot - on the second step. Now with the whole body forward. Now raise your left leg to the second step. Doesn't rise. It's a shame. Trembling on

the train. Pull now - and she will fall into the roadside wormwood, and no one will see her. And the train will leave without her, and no one will tell Comrade Stalin that she has almost reached. That she did not reach just one step. No one will tell Comrade Stalin that she hid the folder with documents under the execution cabinet. No one will tell him that the "Control-block" lies in the Volga, tied with a sling to the keel of a broken wooden barge. OK. Leg up. So. She stood up on the step, and burned her foot. Now the right foot - to the third step. And the door is open for her. Only then her sentry noticed: -

Kudyt, cholera! Fuck yours!

Get down! I will shoot! And the shutter - click! But Nastya is already in the

vestibule with her left foot. With both hands - for the walls. Step forward. Another step. Corridor. The corridor wobbles. Floats. At that end - Holovanov. And Sei Seich. The

Firebird smiled at them and pressed her back against the wall. And fell asleep.

8

Senior Major of State Security Bocharov lowered his head into his hands. Sleep was around the corner. And as soon as his head touched a warm hand, sleep broke out around the corner by the capital express and crushed, and tore, and scattered around the world shreds of what a moment ago was called the senior major of state security.

For seven days, the senior major of state security slept a total of eleven hours and thirty-four minutes.

Missing girl. Gone. The entire left bank of the Volga was searched from Yaroslavl to Astrakhan. All bridges are under control, all marinas, all ships and boats. She could not go to the right bank. Could not. So she drowned. So she died.

Game continues. But the senior major of state security now needs to sleep. He needs two hours of sleep. Now. Bocharov put his head in his hands and fell asleep with that dream that tears us out of life for a while, that hits us with a butt in the back of the neck, knocking out all the memories and thoughts, from which you go crazy, like from the infusion of a self-dancing mushroom, that dream from which you need to break out, like from a toothy crocodile mouth, waking up from which you ask: who am I?

9

Nastya slides her back along the wall. But he doesn't know it anymore, he doesn't remember. Holovanov runs towards her. Sey Seich runs to her. She hears their steps, and sees dreams. Dreams fell upon her, which she had not finished watching on the way, on a grain barge, at the execution point of the NKVD, in a monastery, in a parachute club, in an iron closet, in a huge apartment. The dreams came crashing down like a thousand tons, and she saw them all at once. She saw dreams, endless and fleeting, joyful and sad, terrible and cheerful. She dreamed of flowers and waves, she dreamed of Comrade Stalin and Comrade Yezhov. She dreamed of Major Terenty Peresypkin, who in the People's Commissariat of Communications grappled in a fierce verbal skirmish with the all-powerful people's commissar of communications, the former head of the Gulag and deputy people's commissar of the NKVD, state security commissioner of the first rank Matvey Berman. She dreamed of the first lesson in the first grade and the first execution, she dreamed of knights and castles, swords, sabers and revolvers. She dreams of a wounded captain of the Life Guards of the Cuirassier Regiment and a beautiful Lahti pistol, which has become light and comfortable in the hand. She dreamed of the divine melody of the "Amur Waves", she dreamed of beautiful ladies in white dresses with handsome officers of the Cavalier Guard Regiment.

Kholovanov ran only ten meters along the corridor, and she already dreamed of rice fields, and people in the fields, and cedar forests, and a deserted island, and deep glassy-green waters. And she drowned in the waters.

This Seich opened its gates and quickly searched to see if there was anything important with him. But there is nothing with her. Nothing at all. Overalls

tattered, boots knocked down on tattered laces. On a wide dusty belt is a holster and a Luger pistol with seven rounds.

Holovanov picked her up in his arms. She opened her eyes. And closed. Now all the dreams have departed at once and only one deep and clear dream remains: she is drowning. She is in the depths, in clear water. She has already drowned. She is no more. And her body glides through the water into the bottomless depths. And the green water turned into blue, blue into black. And she slowly goes down, down,

down.

Deeper.

Deeper. Deeper.

Chapter 27

1

Kholovanov tore off the telephone receiver - and to the driver: drive! Where to drive? Drive to Moscow, to the Kremlin

station. The repair train jerked and caused. And it did. How fast it picks up speed! Kholovanov government on the route: traffic schedules to break, the train "Glavspetsremstroy-12" - the "blue wave". Send telegraph poles

flickering outside the window. Yes, more often. This Seich the Firebird in his arms is free in the compartment. She fell asleep with some suspicious sleep. The Firebird has exhausted its strength to the very bottom. Mental and physical. Exhausted, and there is no more will to live. She fell asleep without saying anything, but it seemed that she was falling asleep, saying goodbye. I fell asleep with such an expression on my face that, they say, I don't need anything else. Came to you, and all. And the end. And stay away. Her dream is fading. So the kitten dies - it seems that it just falls asleep, but falls asleep

not just, but forever. Just look, and the Firebird will not wake up. Never. This Seich will not allow. The girl must be brought alive to Stalin and handed over personally. It's easy for Holovanov to say: take off your shoes. How to shoot? The laces are all torn, all knotted. You won't know where the ends are. Sey Seich took out an overseas knife. Pot-bellied such, red sides with a white cross. It is called: Swiss officer. The best in the world. One spy friend brought as a gift. There, in Switzerland, they do nothing but watches and knives. Yes, they count money. But if they consider it, then so that they always have income. Superprofit. If they make watches, so that they never stop. If a knife is made, so that the blades do not break. There are fifty-eight tools in the knife: a corkscrew, a fork, an awl, a file, scissors, and many more amazing things that you can't think of using without reading the instructions.

Sey Seich opened the thinnest, sharpest blade, and cut off their laces. He pulled the boot on himself - she answered with a groan. Need to be more careful. The boots seem to have become attached to the legs, welded on. He took off his right shoe. Now socks. She's just not wearing socks. There were torn rags left from the socks. Legs were worn to the blood, beaten, rags were baked to the legs. It is necessary to soak, otherwise you will not peel off, you will not

scrape off. - Hot, like an open-hearth furnace in the metallurgical city of Magnitogorsk. -

Soak a towel and wipe your face. The Firebird rushes about in delirium, groans. Comrade Stalin demands. Seyich touched her lips with a wet towel, and she clung to the cold. Ah, pig heads: they didn't think to give a drink.

- Come on, comrade Holovanov, bring water, but with ice.

The Firebird drinks greedily, spilling water and choking. -

Come on, comrade Kholovanov, let's undress the girl, and telegraph to Moscow, let the scientific professor go to the train

put up.

2

Concern for Holovanov: what to tell Stalin? Did the Firebird complete the task or not? She didn't bring the "control block" with her, what follows from this? Did she destroy it or not find it? If the "Control-

block" remained in the hands of Yezhov and his guys, then you have to throw the cards: the game is lost. If she destroyed him, then there was a balance: Yezhov cannot take control of the communications system, and Stalin cannot. In this situation, you can lose, but you can win. Maybe the best situation:

she got the Control Block, but she was afraid to carry it with her and hid it somewhere. This is almost a victory; you need to bring her to her senses and ask where she hid the block. If the task had not been completed at least partially, the Firebird would not have come to the train. You can't hope for much, but, apparently, she did the minimum.

3

Pret "Glavspetsremstroy", disperses all trains from its path. Pret - only the traffic lights in front of him are lit with blue fire. Only couriers from Khabarovsk and Vladivostok huddle on sidings, giving way. Rushing

"Glavspetsremstroy", and ahead of him the rumor rushes and behind him the rumor rumbles all the way to Vladivostok: the Trotskyists mined the track and blew up the government train - though empty, without Comrade Stalin. Repair trains are being pulled to the crash site from all over the Union. Courier speed. Breaking motion graphics. In vain they would not.

4

Night over Moscow.

One Stalin.

The government has arrived. Encrypted with a personal Stalinist cipher in three cascades. The secretary, Comrade Poskrebyshchev, deciphered the first two cascades, handed Stalin a piece of paper, and disappeared. Stalin is alone again. He took out a cipher notebook from the safe, made out the text. It turned out: "BLOCK NEUTRALIZED STOP DRAGON STOP".

Stalin tore off the used sheet of the encryption notebook, brought a match. Paper in encryption notebooks is good because its composition is close to cellulose explosives: it ignites with a light pop, burns instantly, almost explodes, and leaves no ash. The paper of encryption notebooks burns so quickly that it does not burn your fingers: puff - and there is no piece of paper. Holovanov is doing the right thing by

sending short messages. Long decipher an hour. And it is not clear who controls the communication channels now. The message means: neither Yezhov, nor Frinovsky, nor Bocharov, nor Berman can take control of the entire communications of the country. But he, Stalin, cannot either. The balance of power. Stalin chuckled with a cheerful devil.

5

“Glavspetsremstroy” is rushing, and special conductor Sey Seich is trying to feed the

Firebird. “Come on, Comrade Holovanov, hold her head. The girl will die before Moscow. The skeleton was left alone from walking. No look, no fat. Scarier than a ballerina. Comrade Stalin is ashamed to show. But we are her chicken broth. Doesn't want to. Muzzle turns. There is no consciousness in her, but her face still turns up - to know, she refuses to accept it from the inside. And we are her caviar. Useful caviar. And nutritious. Again muzzle turns back. And you, comrade Holovanov, hold on tight. Stronger. To not turn back. Like this. We are her caviar. In. Liked. And further. So. Biting! Look, it bites! Like a prosaic kitten.

6

A long black Lincoln with round sides and three-finger-thick greenish windows rustled its tires in front of the majestic granite driveway. A man came out in boots, in an open gray soldier's overcoat, in a green cap, ran up the steps and, leaning forward, opened a multi-ton door, which silently and smoothly obeyed him. The door should be opened by the sergeants of state security, but at four o'clock on a

cold October night, the first sergeant relied on the second, the second on the first. And both decided: let the comrade open the door himself. The night is hopeless, at such a time important people leave the building, and do not enter it. Clearly, the visitor is not important. So let yourself. Yes, and the overcoat on a comrade is not that ... Important people do not go in such. In general, it turned out that the night visitor himself had to open the door. The chill of the night broke into the warm marble

lobby. Two sentry sergeants crossed their bayonets in front of the newcomer, blocking his way, and a rosy-cheeked lieutenant of state security who appeared out of nowhere raised his hand in a stopping gesture: “Where are you going, comrade? Your pass!

The newcomer slowly turned his head to the left and looked into the eyes of the sergeant. That rifle shook. She trembled imperceptibly. At the rifle

long thin stalk. The tip of the bayonet is like a thin sensitive arrow of a precision instrument. This is the tip that trembled. Only those who stood nearby and carefully followed the tip of the bayonet could notice this. But who could stand next to a state security sergeant and examine the tip of his bayonet for four nights? So historians have different opinions on this matter: some are convinced that the tip of the bayonet trembled, others that it did not. Personally, I'm leaning towards the fact that I still trembled. But a little noticeable.

Be that as it may, whether he trembled or not, the sergeant took his rifle aside, opening the way for the newcomer. The man in the overcoat turned his head to the right and looked into the eyes of another sergeant. And the second bayonet trembled. Completely imperceptible. And the second sergeant also opened the way for the newcomer.

Then the man in the soldier's overcoat looked into the eyes of the lieutenant. The lieutenant was confused. Downcast. He glanced at the large wall clock and tried to remember the time. The hands showed 3 hours 56 minutes. The lieutenant did not know why it was necessary to remember the time. And it was just a defensive reaction of the psyche. The lieutenant realized with his being that it was *him*. But consciousness needs time to come to terms with the news of such crushing power. Our psyche is arranged in such a way that in situations characterized by extreme sharpness and drama, an inhibitory reaction of consciousness arises, which does not allow completely unusual news to instantly spread with a terrible blow throughout the body. Consciousness does not want to accept such news quickly and immediately, it softens it with a thousand protests: this cannot be! Never! It's just incredible. Why at night? Why no warning? Why no protection? Why did the car immediately leave without waiting? So he was left alone? Why was there only one car? Why unaccompanied? He never walks alone. Especially at night. It's not him! Not like that. In the portraits, he is completely different. What if it's just a double? They made up the double and tested their vigilance... A heavy look pierced the lieutenant of state security through and through, ripped open his insides, like a peasant horn ripped open the belly of a Bonaparte soldier.

The lieutenant felt such a look on himself only once: this is how a twelve-meter Brazilian

Anaconda from the wilds of the Amazon. But then there was thick glass between the lieutenant and the anaconda.

Now there was no glass.

The lieutenant swayed, but remained upright because the gaze of the newcomer was simultaneously pushing, throwing and overturning his body, and at the same time pulling. The forces were balanced, and the lieutenant did not fall forward or backward. From this look, the lieutenant's legs became light, his stomach weightless, his chest imperceptible, bells rang in his brain, a hundred million needles hit his body, there was a rustle around him. This is where the balance of super-powerful forces was disturbed, which at the same time attracted the lieutenant and threw him away. The magnetic power of the gaze overcame the repulsive force, and the lieutenant was pulled towards those eyes. The ceiling slid back and the floor hit the lieutenant in the face. He was lucky: the floor hit him not with sparkling marble, but with a thick soft carpet. It was at that moment that his doubts dissipated. The lieutenant of state security understood: this is not a double.

Two with bayonets stretched out strings and no longer breathed or blinked. In the head of the sergeant, who was standing on the left, a desire to help the fallen lieutenant to rise slipped like a snake's tail, but only the sergeant licked his dry lips, and immediately forgot about it, like about everything else.

The newcomer looked with interest and incomprehension at the body of his feet and carefully stepped over him, remarking:

"What gentle lieutenants in state security ...

7

Rushing "Glavspetsremstroy", bridges rumble under it, wheels knock at the junctions. Holovanov drinks vodka. Nature is wide. A lot of vodka fits into that nature. And he doesn't get drunk. In the seventh compartment, the Firebird laughs deliriously. And Stalin is calling. Who is he laughing at? What should she report to Stalin? Had she dug up something on Holovanov?

Sure, she took it. Otherwise, I wouldn't laugh. Now Stalin will get all the documents. Everything that the Chekists have collected on Holovanov for twenty years. And there was something to collect ... I would like to know from her what she is on

Holovanova dug up. Then choke. And if you don't manage to find out, it's all one thing - to strangle. She doesn't need much now: press her mouth with her palm - not a single doctor will later find out. And Stalin is not offended. Report to Stalin: so and so, before her death she said that, they say, she found a folder on Stalin and burned it. And I threw the "Control-block" into the river. And Holovanov decided to secretly pay a visit to the seventh compartment.

Chapter 28

1

On a white marble staircase, on a wide red carpet, a man in a soldier's overcoat climbed to the bust of Dzerzhinsky, where the second pair of sentries slammed their rifle butts, with particular clarity, performing the rifle technique "On guard, in the corporal way": rifles with bayonets sharply forward, just as sharply back and to the right. Freeze. The man looked at them meticulously, nodded approvingly - they say, at least some kind of order in this house - and turned along the wide stairs to the right. They rushed both sentry rifles to the left to the shoulders, threw them sharply forward, then back, again slamming their butts on the floor.

Froze. The man in the greatcoat turned around and looked at those at the door. They froze like marble statues. The lieutenant lies with his arms outstretched. And until it moves. The newcomer led with his shoulder, as if repeating in surprise: "What gentle lieutenants in state security ..." And

the news swept through the corridors, offices and halls of a huge building, breaking walls and doors, smashing people to smithereens, crushing them into walls and ceilings: "HE". And immediately after the first all-destroying wave - the second: "HERE". From archival and execution cellars, from underground stokers and crematoriums, through chirring telegraph rooms, through executive offices, through torture chambers and loners, through canteens and restaurants, through countless elevators and stairs to walking courtyards on the very roof, two shock waves swept and, colliding into a single overturning rumble, again swept through the corridors and stairs: "HE IS HERE." Cabinet doors slammed shut. Phones crackled. Messengers

ran. The sentries in the stairwells were filled with stern determination. The guards along the prison corridors pulled up the straps, slightly loosened on the occasion of the night, and fastened the upper

buttons on the collars, unbuttoned for the same occasion. Night shift investigators and defendants cheered up. The sleeping shifts of the guards in their sleep sniffed, grunted, alerted, tensed in readiness to wake up and break loose on command: "Kr-r-raul! In the gun! Two softened policemen on Dzerzhinsky

Square started at the sight of a majestic spectacle: in a huge house in which only thirty or forty windows were lit, suddenly here and there windows began to light up one at a time, in groups and entire floors. AND

everything lit up.

And from this building, and from this square, along boulevards, avenues, along wide streets and crooked alleys, along spit-stained squares and broken churches, along sleeping houses and sleepless stations, an invisible and inaudible, but pressing all it happens. Important. And incomprehensible.

2

The night visitor opened the doors to a spacious office. From the wall, a five-meter-high man in boots, in an open soldier's overcoat, in a green cap, was looking at him. The visitor examined his portrait, went to the bookshelves and glanced at the spines of the books. Nothing interesting: Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. All books are large, only one booklet is small. What is this? This is the Field Charter of the Red Army in 1936. PU-36. That's what Comrade Yezhov, People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, is reading! However, he does not read: the pages are not cut.

Without taking off his overcoat, the visitor sat down in the People's Commissar's chair, put his cap on the green cloth. The desk of the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs looks like a football field: both green and almost the same size.
same.

The man in the overcoat never read the books from the beginning. He opened them on any page and read until he liked what he was reading. And now, with a sparkling silver knife, he cut the page, read the first thing that caught his eye, grinned,

From a silver cup shaped like a football cup, he took a thick red pencil with golden ribs, a golden profile of the Spasskaya Tower and a golden inscription in Slavic script "Kremlin" and underlined Article Six with a bold line: "Suddenness has a stunning effect."

3

Pret "Glavspetsremstroy", and special conductor Sey Seich takes care of the Firebird like a small unreasonable child. The main thing is to bring down the heat. So it doesn't crash! Even if you wrap it with wet cold sheets, even put ice on your cheeks. Her only name is the Firebird. Actually. Well at least he drinks water. Well, at least he takes caviar. If a little. The inside of caviar requires water, you want to drink more. It's good when you want something. When you don't want anything, then that's it.

Sey Seich waters the Firebird with spring water, and he himself thinks. Why did Holovanov get drunk? Doesn't look like Holovanov. How many roads with him traveled all over the country. For girls, yes. Comrade Holovanov is weak on girls. Unstoppable. But the booze was not noticed by him. And here and "Lemon" give him. And Pepper. Or they sent us a new experimental vodka. "Capital" is called. Five bottles per sample. So he took the sample thoroughly: he drank all five. A snack does not accept his gut. At the right time to hold his head and feed him with silver sturgeon caviar from a spoon. Drinking for joy? They don't drink for joy. Why then drink? The girl was saved. Girl Comrade Stalin is lucky with a message of special importance. Is it bad? Why is Holovanov not happy? Do not understand this Seich

court whim. Only it seems that Holovanov is happy with the Firebird and seems to be afraid of it. It seems like two feelings are fighting in him. That's why he drinks.

And Sey Seich decided that it was not good.

4

The man in the overcoat picked up the handset.

The receiver came to life
instantly: - Operative duty senior major of state security Snegirev. - Who
from the leadership of the
NKVD is now in place? - Only Deputy People's
Commissar Comrade Beria. What a good
worker! Re-educated. Reforged. Don't disturb him. Comrade Beria works
the way. And Comrade Yezhov and all his deputies urgently call me.

I'm already calling.

- And Commissar of Communications

Comrade Berman. - I'm listening! - the tube barked so that Stalin winced.

5

Night over the world. Pret "Glavspetsremstroy", cuts the darkness with a
searchlight. Moscow

ahead. Holovanov stopped drinking. He put the empty bottles in a special
basket. Gorochka such ringing. To not roll on the floor. Careful friend. He
washed, combed his hair, and again, well done, well done, he didn't seem to
drink. As a pilot, he tied a white silk scarf around his neck. It's good to choke
with a scarf. Emperor Paul was strangled with a scarf. True, there were no pilots
in Paul's time, and therefore there were no white silk scarves. Therefore, Pavel
had to be strangled with a silver officer's guard. But white silk pilot's is better.
Silk is softer. And there are no prints left. Checked.

6

Least of all any enemy expects an attack on Sunday at four in the morning.
When the tension of a difficult week subsided. When the guards loosened their
belts a little. When the sentries secretly unbuttoned the buttons on the collar.
When the officer on duty, stretching sweetly, reported by phone that the night
had passed without incident. When the squares and boulevards quieted down.
When the police are on the square

Dzerzhinsky slightly softened in anticipation of the change. When the officers who passed the duty threw down their cards and drank their last glasses. When the head of the department finally dumped the quarterly report, told his secretary, the plump wench Mary Vanna at midnight, that there was no longer any need to reprint the report, accompanied her to her house and spent the night because the trolleybuses no longer run.

And when the last random blue trolleybus gathered all its passengers in Moscow at night and left for the bend, that's when you need to act. And let them crackle,

tear the phones. And let the messengers rush, let the crazed couriers rush. Let only the sleeping people's commissars and their deputies wake up. Let them pull on their boots, cursing. Let the sirens of the cars roar. Let the drivers swear. Let the telephone operators and the attendants suffocate. Let them rush and run. Let them stumble. - Hello! Hello! Is this Comrade Yezhov? Not

Comrade Yezhov? Can you tell me where? At the Central Committee? We called. He is not in the Central Committee. In Lefortovo for interrogation? We called. He is not in Lefortovo for interrogation. In Sukhanov for interrogation? He is not in Sukhanov for interrogation. At the Lubyanka? Why are you hanging noodles on my ears? Where am I calling you from? He is not here. At the mistress? The mistress does not have it. Have a good friend? Ah, there. Hello. Isn't Comrade Yezhov with you? What? Wake up! And I said: wake up! Hello, comrade Berman. No comrade Berman? Also a good friend? And where, do not tell me? Hello. Wake up! Comrade Frinovsky? Is that you, Comrade Frinovsky? Yes. Urgently. Urgently, comrade Frinovsky. No. Tanks area is not cordoned off. No. The troops are not cordoned off. He is alone. Without security. Yes, no security. I repeat: one. In Comrade Yezhov's office. Yes. Waiting.

Chapter 29

1

- Allow me, Comrade Stalin? -
Come in. -

Deputy People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, commander of the first rank Frinovsky, according to your appointment ... - Sit down, sit down. Comrade Stalin is kind and affectionate. And he still can't tear himself away from the little book, he'll read another line, here's another one. And highlight something. The little book looks like the Criminal Code of 1926. UK-26. Only red.

2

Holovanov looked out into the corridor. Nobody. And who should be here? Three of them for the whole car, for the whole world: the Firebird laughs in his compartment, but Seich sleeps

in his closet. Wrapped up on the road. He didn't close his eyes. Holovanov did not wear sparkling boots. Why a creak in poetic silence? His socks are of English wool. Especially for polar pilots from the London store "Harrods" are delivered. Good socks. No noise, no squeak. And the carpet is good. Well, so good that it seems to be specially invented for such a case. Holovanov walks like a snow leopard across the carpet: softly.

Almost like Stalin.

3

Stalin put aside the Field Regulations and smiled at Frinovsky. - Didn't you read it?

No, Comrade Stalin. "Here, take it and read it. I myself, to confess, have never read, and then such a little book came to hand. Very interesting. And in a timely manner. We are completing the cleansing of the country. We have destroyed almost all internal enemies. There are a handful of scoundrels left, but we will finish them off. The main thing is done, you have done a good job in the field of extermination of internal enemies. A new appointment for you. And we ourselves will complete the work of exterminating internal enemies. Now that's not the point. Now it is the turn of external enemies. That is why it is important for you to know this book by heart. Just don't forget to return it to Comrade Yezhov, I took it here without permission. Comrade Yezhov also needs to know the Field Regulations in all details. A new stage is coming. The next year, 1939, will be the year of the war. Of course, we won't get into it right away. But external enemies are the main concern now. We, Comrade Frinovsky, consulted with our comrades, and decided to transfer you to the decisive sector. With a raise. We have decided to

appoint you People's Commissar of the Navy. - Comrade Stalin, I have never

been on a warship. - Here you will stay. "I can't do it, Comrade Stalin. - Get it right. I know your abilities. The duty officer knocked on the door and reported, stretching out:

"The people's commissar for communications, Comrade Berman, has arrived. - Call. And you, comrade Frinovsky, will go to the Pacific Fleet, deal with its condition, put things in order. Just no more arrests. We have already caught enough enemies. Some will even have to let go. You have three weeks to check the Pacific Fleet, then you have to check the condition of the Northern Fleet, the Baltic and Black Sea.

- I'm leaving for the Pacific Fleet today. - No no.

The matter is urgent. Courier train to Vladivostok - twelve days. I'd rather give you my plane "Stalin route". You will be carried by my personal pilot comrade Holovanov. He, however, is not here now. He is now in Zhiguli. Imagine, some crooks wanted to use the communication systems in the unfinished underground command post in Zhiguli, and they planned to capture or simply disable the systems and communication centers in Moscow. But I have on

this case their control systems. For such situations, I have a special group of people who can analyze the actions of a potential enemy, make the right decisions and carry them out quickly and coolly. I sent my man to the Zhiguli. She worked like an enchantress. - She? "She is," Stalin confirmed and smiled.

- I have smart people
besides

Holovanov. Kholovanov was there, but by no means did he play the main role. Excuse me, comrade Frinovsky, he started talking. I'm just celebrating a victory and that's why I talk a lot. The main thing, comrade Frinovsky, is to keep the situation under control, to have good assistants who can work with their heads and not talk too much. Let's get back to business: Holovanov can appear at any moment. It is better for you not to go home, but to wait for Holovanov at the Moskva Hotel in order to rest before a long journey. In the hotel, in the west wing, renovations unfolded. But they reported that two suites were already ready. Wait in one of them. I ordered all telephones in the room to be turned off so that you would not be disturbed in vain. Your life for me and for the whole country now has a special meaning, so I will give you a completely unusual bodyguard. Comrade Shirmanov. Top notch professional. And the whole team has the same choice. Shirmanov recently toured America. Even Kholovanova surprised with his art. It is a pity that nothing can be said about the exploits of this man. Maybe only fifty years from now some tabloid writer will write it into the novel. Without going into details...

"Come in, Comrade Berman. Good morning. We appointed you Commissar of Communications, but you are an old Chekist, you are the head of the Gulag and Deputy People's Commissar of Internal Affairs. I really like that you are in the KGB uniform and walk around. Have you lost your

Chekist grip? - I try to save, Comrade Stalin.

- I hope that in the People's Commissariat of Communications you recruited all your closest subordinates into your KGB network.

- That's right, Comrade Stalin,
everyone. - While I was waiting for you, I ordered to bring undercover
files on all your closest subordinates. Here's how many, cases. The whole
mountain. You did a good job. Indeed, all of you are recruited. Only ... Only
I did not find an undercover file on Major Terenty Peresypkin. He graduated
from the Military Electrotechnical Academy last year and was sent to your
People's Commissariat. Where is his business? Even by
the light of the lamp, one can see that Berman turned
pale: "Comrade Stalin, Peresypkin is a small pawn. He is only about
thirty years old. -
Thirty four. "He's
just a major... and I... I didn't have time to recruit him into my
net.
"I ordered him to be called. Enter, Major Peresypkin.

5

The door to the compartment of the Firebird is ajar. This is good. For less noise.
And it's dark in the compartment. And the corridor is dark. Even the purple lamps are
turned off so that the light does not interfere
with her. Holovanov stepped into
the compartment. He
bent over her. Asleep. Spread out in a dream. He sleeps in a disturbing and
painful sleep. With his right hand, Holovanov pulled the scarf from the neck of his bull. AND
came closer to the Firebird. And
from a dark corner came
a voice: "Don't wake her up, comrade Kholovanov. Just fell asleep,
dear. Kholovanov winced.
- Is that you, Sei
Seich? - Who else? We'll come, at Comrade Stalin's, I won't be
ashamed, I'll ask for a day off out of turn. Tired with her. He didn't close his
eyes. I don't eat, I don't drink, I feed her, skinny,
everything. - So why don't you drink yourself, Sey Seich? I you
now. - Not allowed to work. Here I will hand over the duty in Moscow ...
So, if you please, do not worry. Better go to sleep, comrade Kholovanov.
I'll look after her.

And Holovanova gently pushes out of the compartment by the shoulders. Hello Holovanov. But Sey Seich is not one of the small-caliber ones either. A platform flashed past the window, flooded with light. That light flashed along the corridor, along all the metal details. Holovanov is a pilot. Trained to catch all changes in the situation in a fifth of a second. I caught it: another metal detail appeared in the interior - a hefty Lahti flashed behind Sey Seich's belt. Everyone in control chooses a weapon for himself. Holovanov did not know that Sey Seich had the same taste. I chose, damn it, with a concept.

- Well, I'm going to sleep,

Sei Seich. "Sleep, comrade Holovanov. May you have happy dreams.

Chapter 30

1

- Comrade Stalin, Major Peresyarkin according to your order ... - Comrade Peresyarkin, the next year, 1939, will be the year of war. I want to check the security of nodes, lines and systems of government, state, administrative, diplomatic and military communications. To do this, I decided, without warning anyone, to suddenly start a war game. Imagine that Comrade Berman, People's Commissar for Communications, is on a long vacation and all his closest subordinates are on a long vacation. And now you have received information that there is a conspiracy in the People's Commissariat of Communications, that some enemies of the human race are planning to seize communication centers or paralyze the work of the main communication systems in Moscow. Imagine that I have no one else to rely on. All hope is on you, Major. You urgently need to ensure security. What would you do? "I would do a blood transfusion. - Oh, that's how. What is this transfusion? - I would call Commissar of Defense Comrade Voroshilov and demand that seven communications battalions from the Moscow Military District, the 5th Heavy Tank Brigade and two rifle regiments from the 1st Moscow Proletarian Rifle Division be transferred to my disposal. With these forces, I would change the calculations of the main communication centers and all the guards and ensure the inviolability of the main objects. In principle, it is possible to militarize all communication systems in a few hours. Fighters-operators will, of course, confuse a lot at first, but communication will somehow work, and the conspirators will simply have no one to rely on: all people are new, all strangers, everyone is alert and follow only those orders that come from you personally, comrade Stalin.

Stalin turned to Berman. - But the major came up with a good idea!

"Uh-huh," Berman agreed. And the collar pulled back from his throat, as if that one was strangling him. As if a collar with buttonholes and large rhombuses of red enamel turned into a dog collar. And Stalin - to Peresypkin: - All right, Comrade

Peresypkin. I am now calling

Comrade Voroshilov, he will provide the forces you require. The game starts now. Declare a state of emergency in the People's Commissariat of Communications and act without any conditions. Comrade Berman will go with me to my nearest dacha and will play the role of a scoundrel and a conspirator. I will be your judge. From my dacha, Comrade Berman will try to lead the capture of communication nodes and systems or try to turn them off altogether. Your task, Major Peresypkin, is to ensure the continuous and accurate functioning of communication systems. Let's see what happens with Comrade Berman. - Comrade Stalin, what if someone really gets into the communication centers? "We play seriously, comrade major. If anyone climbs, then shoot,

catch, crush with tanks. What did they teach you at the academy?

Peresypkin smiled. - Why are you smiling? "Finally, it's real. "Me too, comrade major, I like the real deal. Won't you let me down? - I will not fail. - Since the game has gone serious, then here's what.

Here, Comrade Berman told me a lot of good things about you, said that you are a great person, that broad prospects for service open up before you. Comrade Berman knows your personal matter in great detail. So, Comrade Berman? "Uh-huh," Berman confirmed. - In general, Comrade Berman and I consulted here and decided to start by assigning you the rank of colonel, so that there would be no feeling of a game, so that everything would be real. Here are your insignia.

Stalin carefully took out a rustling, unopened envelope from his inner pocket, opened it, and handed Peresypkin the buttonholes of a colonel in the communications troops. - I serve the Soviet

Union!

- Go, Colonel. Take action. All the top leadership of the People's Commissariat of Communications for the duration of the exercises, on my behalf, declare a long vacation and not let them into the People's Commissariat. For the duration of the exercises, you obey only me personally and carry out only my orders. And forever: you obey only me personally and carry out only my orders. And if any geek decides to recruit you into his network, shoot him.

2

Having released Peresypkin, Stalin picked up the phone again: "So where is Comrade Yezhov?"

- Comrade Stalin, Comrade Yezhov a little ... how would it be ... one In other words, a little

drunk. - Did you

wake him up? - We can't wake up for

an hour and a half ... - Good. Don't wake up. Take the sleeper to the Moscow Hotel. -

Will be done. - And when he wakes up, tell him that a certain comrade Gutalin said hello and wanted to talk. It was an urgent matter.

3

The alarm clock rattles above the ear so that the senior major of state security Bocharov wants to shoot him. But Bocharov cannot shoot the alarm clock simply because he cannot wake up. The officer on duty shakes his shoulder:

"Comrade Senior Major of the State... Comrade Senior

Major of State...

Bocharov hears the first four words and falls asleep. And again hears four words. And falls asleep again. He

soaked the duty towel in cold water, wring it out and put it on Bocharov's face:

- Comrade Senior Major of State Security, Moscow.

Bocharov looked at the phones for a long time, wondering where the alarm clock was placed between the phones. Then I realized that not only an alarm clock, but also a telephone could rumble with a disgusting roar. Realizing this, it remains to figure out which tube to pick up. I looked at the time. Seven hours thirteen minutes. In Moscow now - six hours thirteen minutes. And the phone is vicious. Bocharov understood: this is not the Kremlin. This is not Stalin. This Lubyanka telephone is rampant. It is better. You can always

explain yourself to Lubyanka. Picked up the phone and heard the voice of Stalin. -

Comrade Bocharov, it's me, Gulin. "I recognized you, Comrade Stalin. What kind of Gulin are you? You

are not Gulin at all. Hello Comrade Stalin. - Good morning, comrade Bocharov. At this early hour, I'm disturbing you on this matter. Information has reached me that you have never met Comrade Yezhov in an off-duty situation. So, my comrades and I consulted here, and we decided to invite both of

you to visit us. Thank you,

Comrade Stalin. "Besides, you never met comrades Berman and Frinovsky in an off-duty situation. Having learned about this, I did not sleep all night: my heart aches for you, I kept thinking how to gather you all together under one roof. In one company. There are no problems with Comrade Yezhov, Berman and Frinovsky. They are all ready for the fun. You can call their home and office phones - they will not answer: they are already visiting me. Only you, comrade Bocharov, are missing. So come. - Comrade Stalin,

the courier "Kuibyshev - Moscow" has left an hour back, next tomorrow.

"I know, Comrade Bocharov. Therefore, he ordered the schedules to be broken, the Kuibyshev-Moscow courier train to be stopped and returned. He will be with you in Kuibyshev in twenty-three minutes. At the first platform. I ordered a compartment for you in a government carriage. The stationmaster is waiting with tickets. And I ordered the Kuibyshev police chief to give you a car and all traffic in

city on the site from the NKVD to the station to block. It's time for you to have time for our fun. - Yes,

Comrade Stalin. But is there any reason for fun? - There is a reason, Comrade Bocharov. There, at your special stage, a certain Firebird was practicing. She completed her task. There, on the special stage, she turned into a real scout. I'm sure Hitler doesn't have one. So, my comrades and I consulted here, and we decided to reward this same Firebird with something. Just haven't decided what yet. You will just have the opportunity to congratulate the Firebird on the award on behalf of the personnel of the Kuibyshev Directorate of the NKVD. Besides, Comrade Bocharov, we have something to discuss with you.

4

Pret "Glavspetsremstroy".

Sey Seich got the Order of Lenin from the cache in his compartment. He placed it carefully on the table next to the Firebird.

Pret "Glavspetsremstroy", and the Firebird in it. And the bridges rumble. There is no end to bridges. One big bridge. It rumbles and suddenly breaks off, and the Firebird flies in a rumbling carriage, and laughs. And again Glavspetsremstroy hits the roaring bridge, and the train rushes, and rumbles, and whistles. And cuts the darkness with a searchlight. The searchlight hurts his eyes with unbearable pain, and the Firebird closes with his hand from the beating light. And Holovanov is near, and wants to close her eyes with his white silk scarf. To not blind her. Yes, Holovanov, yes. Cover your eyes with a scarf. You are not Holovanov at all. You are the Dragon. What a funny

nickname - Dragon. Funny? Funny. This Seich in the corner: boo-boo-boo. She doesn't let Seich Holovanov close her eyes with a scarf. What a bad person this Sey Seich is. Make fun of him. Ha ha ha. How funny we all are. You are very

funny comrade, Sei Seich. But where is Comrade Stalin?

5

Someone leaned over the Firebird and affectionately
like this: - Where is the "Control-block"? Where
is the case on Gultin? - No, - the Firebird laughs, - I'll only tell
Comrade Stalin. "I am
Comrade Stalin. "No," the Firebird laughs, "you are not Stalin. I
know Stalin. Trust me, I
am Stalin. It's funny to her. Funny to tears. Hot and funny: I don't believe you
whiskered. Well, what kind of
Stalin are you? Stalin took her hot hand in his hands: believe me.

Chapter 31

1

- Comrade Stalin, science in this case guarantees nothing
can not.

- Nothing?

Nothing, Comrade Stalin. -

What an unguaranteed science we have.

- Comrade Stalin, this is an almost exceptional case. Everything has to do with memory. Every person has a good memory. But the average person uses less than a hundredth of their ability to remember. Among ordinary people there are those who use their abilities by half, by three quarters or more, but then the horizons move apart and the ability to remember increases dramatically. The more we load our memory, the more its volume increases. But this is about ordinary people. Among ordinary people there are phenomenal exceptions. In every million people there are three or four people with a truly outstanding memory. But that's not all. Among seventy or eighty million people, one can meet with a memory that has no limits at all, no boundaries. - You could not find the limits of her memory? – When she started working in the monastery, we tried to determine the limits of her memory

and could not. Not because they didn't work

well. Nobody can find these limits. There is none of them. This is an extremely rare case. Perhaps it is the only one of its kind in the whole country. Maybe there is one more. But according to the theory of probability, there should not be a third such person in our entire vast country now. People with such a memory were in previous generations and, perhaps, will appear in future ones. And only such truly exceptional individuals, whose memory is limitless, sometimes fall into a strange disease. Sometimes, from physical and nervous tension, perception is exacerbated to the extreme. She perceives the ticking of the clock as blows.

hammer on an anvil at the very ear. She perceives any very weak light as a blow of a super-powerful searchlight beam in the face. She smells the flowers in the house next door. We keep her in a completely dark room in absolute sound isolation. She was starving because the smell of any food suffocated her. There is hope that the disease will go away on its own. There are encouraging signs. She does not regain consciousness, but the temperature was brought down. We manage to feed her, and death from physical exhaustion no longer threatens her. We brought flowers into her room and it didn't hurt her. But the perception of sounds and light is still painfully heightened...

- And science is powerless? "People with such a memory are extremely rare in world science. Cases known to science can be counted on the fingers. Such a disease happens only to such exceptionally rare individuals. – But Soviet science is higher than all world bourgeois science! - That's right, Comrade Stalin, but this strange disease has not been studied by Soviet science either, they have not even come up with a name for it, not to mention the development of treatment methods. - What will Soviet science do if such a disease happens to me?

2

Nastya woke up in a large white room. The windows are wide open and the room is cold. Outside the window the sea is raging. She is covered with a heavy soft blanket, and therefore she is warm. Next to the bed is a nightstand. On the bedside table is an order. Her order. But she is weak and cannot see clearly. Double order. It seems that two of them are the same side by side. She reached out her hand and touched her fingers. I took it in my hand. She brought it to her eyes. One order in hand, and the second image remained on the bedside table. And then she stretched out her hand and took another order. And looked at him for a long time. There were two of them. Two orders of Lenin. She put her feet on the floor and sat up, wrapping herself in the blanket as if she were wearing a fur coat. I wonder what's outside the window? She carefully got to her feet. She stood a little. She sat down again. She can't get to the window. The head is spinning. Laid down.

What is the sea splashing? Baltic? No. Not the Baltic. A palm branch swayed outside the window. So south. So the Black Sea. Why is it cold? Probably winter. A sister in

a white scarf peered into the room. I was surprised. I got scared. She ran away. And there

were voices in the hallway. It is heard that they are coming in a small horde. Lots of legs and all in one corridor. And everyone is looking forward to it.

The door opened. At the door is a huge fat professor. All in white. And his gang is in white. The professor has pince-nez on a gold chain. He brought his pince-nez to his eyes and looked at Nastya for a long time, without crossing the threshold. And all his retinue are looking at Nastya from behind the professor's back, from behind the professor's shoulders, from behind the sides.

The professor smiled. And everyone smiled. The professor stepped forward. And everyone stepped forward. The professor came up, sat down on the edge of the bed, and everyone

surrounded the bed. - Well, our bird came to life.

How are you feeling? Nastya just

noded to him: good. - Wonderful. Show language. So. Fine. Say "A". Fine. Eyes? Fine. We'll be up in a week. The retinue

answered with a slight approving noise. The professor turned to someone behind him: "Our Soviet science is indeed

superior to all bourgeois sciences. Telegram to Comrade Stalin.

3

She got up after a week. And she went to the window. And a week later, wrapped in a fur flight jacket, she wandered along the deserted shore. Far, far away over the mountains, every day an airplane rose and, roaring its engines, went for a walk over the sea.

Doctors and nurses don't care about this: an airplane is an airplane, only a big one. And since childhood, Nastya caught all the aviation news on the fly. I remembered, figured it out, figured it out: this, of course, is the TB-7 flying. The enemy of the people Tupolev and the enemy of the people Petlyakov created the best strategic bomber in the world. It's time to test it. I thought about it: who could be a tester on TB-7? Like

Vodopyanov comes out according to her calculations. It will be necessary to ask knowledgeable people. At Holovanov. Where is he?

March is raging in Russia, but here, on the Crimean shores, there is neither snow nor frost. It's just windy and cold. But the weather is always flying. And that is why there are tests of new aircraft and landing gliders all year round. And that is why the best pilots are trained in the Crimea. There are so many airfields here that one can consider Crimea not as a collection of many airfields, but as one large unsinkable

aircraft carrier.

If you look to the east, then there is a large airfield beyond the horizon. To the northeast, another one. Two in the north. If you look to the west, then there are dots in the distance every day in the sky. These are some girls being prepared for the next air parade. They will surprise the world with a group long jump. They are not only prepared for the parade. There is another purpose for groups of brave girls who can fall from the sky without opening up to two hundred. And yesterday a sparkling plane landed there. Maybe "Stalin's route"? And smiled.

Nastya is sitting wrapped up on the shore. Throws rocks into the water. Seagulls scream. Waves crash on the shore. Pebbles rustled behind. I looked back. She covered herself from the sun with her hand - it blinds. In the rays of the sun stands a huge human being. Do not make out faces. Only a leather coat is distinguishable, but boots are brighter than the sun. - Hello, dragon. He picked her up in his

arms. Swirled. - Hello, Firebird. -

Let go, you fool, even Soviet paratroopers
sometimes get dizzy. He lowered

it carefully. - How are you here? - All right, Dragon. Tell me. - What can I tell you? -

Tell me everything. I

do not know anything.

- It's simple. There was a conspiracy. Was. The real one. In their hands were all the communication systems and the unfinished command post in Zhiguli. From there it was possible to manage no worse than from Moscow. And in Moscow, a lot was in their hands. And in the republics. They had something very serious against Comrade Stalin. So serious that they could quite legally catch him at the plenum of the Central Committee of the party and remove him. They could arrest anyone and did whatever they wanted. They already had almost unlimited power in their hands. And they had a "Control-block" - the key to all government, state, military, diplomatic and all other communication systems. Rebellion crushed. Crushed before it could flare up. I arrested Bocharov. With this hand, he presented the warrant. He hit me in the face with this pistol. Well - a handle in the face. Lahti is good because it is heavy. As you move in the snout - like a hammer. One concern: not to death. Good man Bocharov. It's a pity. And if you think about it, then to hell with it. Yezhov was removed from the post of people's commissar of internal affairs, but so far remains people's commissar of water transport. - Yes,

why? - Do not

rush. Everything has its time. Comrade Stalin understands the strategy and tactics of the class struggle better than we do. Mark my word: two or three months will pass, and Comrade Yezhov will disappear. Nobody

will remember him anymore. - Is

Beria now

People's Commissar of

the NKVD? - You are perceptive. - And what about Frinovsky? -

Frinovsky was appointed People's Commissar of the Navy. - So he ... - This is a promotion, but we call such a promotion "kick back to the attic." Frinovsky had to be sent away from Moscow, uprooted. He flew across the Union from Moscow to the outskirts, from the southern mountains to the

northern

seas. Doesn't fly anymore. Removed and arrested. What about Berman? - Comrade Stalin staged exercises and demanded that Berman seize or neutralize communications systems in Moscow by any means. Ber

him from the post of people's commissar of communications. On New Year's Eve, he

was arrested, tried, and already shot. -

Who will be the People's Commissar of Communications now? -

So far, the people's commissar has not been appointed, but

Peresykin is in charge of communications. - The same Major

Peresykin, who quarreled with

Berman? - The same

Colonel Peresykin. Mark my words: Comrade Stalin will appoint him

People's Commissar for Communications. - Colonel - People's Commissar?

- Isn't that what happens to us? Comrade

Stalin will assign the appropriate
title to

him. That's just with

comrades will consult. Comrade Stalin

spares no titles for his comrades. Did Comrade

Stalin find the folder? - Found. What about Control Block? - Why
do you think you need a

second order? - And I burned all the files

on you in a locomotive firebox.

- I know. But at first I remembered everything, and then told Stalin. -

It can not be. - Maybe. I remembered everything. All reported. "I was

chatting, and he was taking notes?" - You know, no. He has a notebook.

He also has a brown notebook in which he writes down who knows what.

He doesn't show it to anyone. But this time he did not write down either in

a notebook or in a notebook. He can completely do without a notebook

and a notebook: he has a memory, like yours. Maybe there are two of you

in the whole country. You laid out page after page for him, he sat and

listened.

As information was copied from a tape

recorder to a tape recorder. Sometimes Comrade Stalin called me to

listen. - Forgive me, Dragon. This is me delirious. - In delirium, in delirium,

but only she told him, she didn't tell

me or the doctors. You told

him because you had such an intention even before your delirium. -

That's right, Dragon, it was. He will thank you for this. But it didn't hurt me

in the end either. The more he knows about me, the easier it is for him to control me. T

– I understood it. That's why I remembered everything and told him. – Do you know what Comrade Stalin did for you? -

Don't know. "He ordered the safe in which Bocharov kept the Control Block to be given to you. - And

where is he now? - It was cleaned, painted and taken to the Zhiguli. In the underground city you have a personal apartment. That's where they put the safe. In delirium, you remembered the safe as a living person and asked Comrade Stalin to give it to you. Comrade Stalin is a kind man. Ordered immediately your desire to fulfill. This, of course, is not all. By obtaining the Control Block, you saved all of us. Not only is he grateful to you, but so am I personally. Ask for whatever you want.

5

Ask for whatever you want. What

does she want? Nastya woke up in the middle of the night. The sea rages outside the window, the wind torments the palm branches, the iron on the roof rattles, and her question struck: what does she want in this life? She never thought about it. She doesn't need anything. You don't need money. Why money? You don't need an apartment either. Happy is he who is not afraid to lose everything. And the one who has nothing to lose is not afraid. She has nothing to lose, all her possessions fit in one soldier's duffel bag. Orders? She has two of them. The highest. Good pistol? A good one is Lahti. Heavy for her "Lahti". And if not Lahti, then Luger. Here he is, next to him.

Ask what you want.

Holovanov will get anything. Will do anything. As a last resort, if he himself cannot, he will tell Stalin. And Comrade Stalin ... So what does she want? For

complete happiness? She even cheered up.

Hundreds of millions of people dream about something day and night. Everyone wants something. No matter how much you have, the dream is always ahead of reality, and we want something again. Every cadet wants to be a lieutenant. But as soon as he became a lieutenant,

I immediately want to be a senior lieutenant. Every captain wants to be a major, and every major wants to be a colonel. Everyone who has a hundred thousand dollars dreams of a million, and everyone who has a million dreams of ten. And Nastya does not need to dream. You just need to say: I want. You just need to name what you want. If you want to become a hero, tomorrow all the newspapers will have a decree: "For the fulfillment of a responsible government task, for courage, courage and heroism ..." You can ask for the title of brigade commander: brigade commander Streletskaya, a rhombus in buttonholes. The Americans call it a brigadier general, but we don't have generals, we have a brigade commander. The same rhombus can mean the rank of senior major of state security: senior major of state security Anastasia Streletskaya.

And you can say: I'm tired, Comrade Stalin, I want to relax, I want a villa in Rio de Janeiro, with a large pool, overlooking the ocean, I don't want long black cars, I want long white ones, I have an open account with Credit Suisse ... Chat I won't, because you can always and everywhere reach me with a long hand ... I want to live quietly, peacefully and enjoy life. Will Stalin allow it? Allow. After all, she saved him the whole empire and the power saved him, the power of the strongest, richest man in the twentieth century ... Comrade Stalin can give her everything except immortality. Is it not enough to ask for an open account and a marble villa in this situation? What then to ask, if you can get **everything?**

In early childhood, Nastya read "Treasure Island": there many adventures happened to the heroes, and in the end they received countless treasures. Then Nastya asked herself: why didn't Robert Stevenson write the book further? And she answered herself: because it's not interesting anymore. Since that time, she began to notice that all interesting books and films are about how people are looking for something, achieving something. And as they found it, the end of the film and the book. Nothing more interesting. This surprised Nastya, and then she turned to her favorite books of early childhood, to those that she had read even before Treasure Island. The same picture: Ivan Tsarevich (or Ivan the Fool) is looking for golden apples, the Firebird, Vasilisa the Beautiful (or Wise). All this is terribly interesting. And as he found, so the fairy tale ends. Nothing special after that.

It turns out that people's lives are happy and interesting only as long as they lack something, as long as they want something, as long as they

aspire to something and seek something.

But can there even come a moment in life when we get everything we want and are ready to exclaim, "Stop, a moment, you are beautiful!" and... give your soul to the devil? And if the devil lives in the image of Comrade Stalin, then hasn't she already given him her soul? And, perhaps, there was already a moment of happiness in her life, higher than which there can be nothing? He was. There was such a moment. Of course there was. And not alone. Ah, if one could weave a

whole life

only from such moments! From moments of power. Absolute and unlimited power. She doesn't need anything else. No need for a rhombus in buttonholes. No need for a golden heroic star. No need for glory and honors. No need for a villa with a pool and long white cars, no need for a bottomless bank account. She will remain a modest, inconspicuous cog of power.

Power!

Only now Nastya understood why Stalin did not hang diamond stars around his neck. A normal person has a home, a family, hobbies and dreams. And Stalin has nothing. Nothing but power. He can possess any woman, but there are no women next to him. He can put on any decorations, but he does not wear decorations. He doesn't need anything: he has the POWER. Power over people, power over life - and death - of everyone. His power is infinite, limitless, limitless. And Nastya touched this power. And she enjoyed it. The priests in ancient Egypt knew a lot about life: everything was subordinated to the service of power. Nastya will be a calm and cold priestess of absolute power. She does not need apartments and outfits, she does not need cars and money.

People going to power, for the most part, do not understand the taste of power. They go to power for the sake of glory, for the sake of wealth, honors and comforts of life. They go to power in the hope of hanging ribbons and stars on themselves, starting harems, building palaces, dressing in luxurious outfits. Such people do not stay long at the top. Robespierre lost because he was led to fame and honors. He was drawn to purely external and incidental manifestations of power.

Only a few go into power for the sake of power itself, feeling its taste without impurities. Nastya knows only one person in the world who has felt and appreciated the taste of power to the end. He walks in boots, in a soldier's overcoat, in a green cap. He does not need to dilute power with awards and titles. He drinks it undiluted. The Firebird turned on the hot pillow and realized that she needed nothing to be happy. She is happy.

6

It was a wonderful spring shooting. The paths in the forest near Moscow smelled of spring. And the execution pit is no longer winter, but spring, fragrant in spring. I love early spring in the suburbs. I love thawed forest roads. I love snowdrops, which I will never pick in the forests near Moscow. And Nastya the Firebird gathered a bouquet before the execution began. Diesel locomotive "Glavspetsremstroy"

pulled up five prison cars. In each car there are three compartments for guards, one compartment for a punishment cell, six compartments for enemies of the people. In each compartment - twelve. There are seventy-two in the car. In five wagons - three hundred and sixty. Somewhere overfilled. Yes, there are malicious enemies in punishment cells. A total of four hundred fifty-four. And eight people who have embarked on the path of correction, who will work in the collection of boots and in the pit on the layout of the bodies. They were not taken by train, they were brought by funnel. From Taganka. They, too, by the end of the work - that. So four hundred and six

The third five-year plan is picking up pace. We are improving in everything. In the execution case - in the first place. Quite recently, three months ago, firing squads were driven through the forest. Now you don't have to drive. Motorization simplifies the execution process. A ZIM bus from the Molotov plant was sent to Kholovanov for such cases. Good bus. Fresh paint shines, fresh paint smells. The bottom is blue. The top one is blue. Aesthetics. Harmony. A feast for the eyes.

Bus entrance at the back. Drive it right up to the door of the car, open one compartment, drop the enemies on the bus, open the second compartment, load it and take it to the cabinets. To not wander back and forth.

Check out the cabinets!

Knitters, cooler to take! So they twist their hands with wire so that they don't even need to shoot. To howl from

pain! Holovanov stands on a hillock. He bared his teeth in a smile. Such a smile in escort dogs happens. Boot on the stump. Kiss you bitches! Kiss. Kiss T.

Kholovanov

kissing lightly with the tip of his boot in the jaw pokes:
wow, dog... With soft contempt.

Comrades Yezhovites, it's your time to answer.

Yezhovites dutifully go to be shot. With broken teeth, with mutilated faces, with flattened fingers. Yezhovites are jumping from the bus, squinting at the sun, smiling, weaned from the sun, in a hurry: if only sooner, if only the execution was not canceled. Many people cannot believe that they have lived to death. Spring is raging in the forest, and for three months they have forgotten that there is spring. They forgot that there is day and sunshine. They have forgotten their names. They remember only that there is death in life. Death brings peace. Death is delivering. Death is desirable and unattainable, like a dream. They dreamed about her in cannibal cellars. And now, in the sweet hope of a quick and easy death, they are pushing each other in a hurry.

To the pit.

Everyone is tired.

Exhausted. Shooting is tedious.

Someone in gray in the bushes completes the wall newspaper. "Stalin's shooter" the newspaper is called. He carefully draws out the last words: "Tired, but satisfied ..." Someone in

gray dreams of becoming a writer. The literary talent awakens in him like the Krakatoa volcano. What Comrade Stalin is not joking about: he will consult with his comrades, and even appoint him a great writer. A classic of socialist realism. In the meantime - the flour of creativity. It is

necessary to describe the execution in the wall newspaper, but so that it is clear to your own what it is about, but to outsiders it is not clear:

"The unit in which Comrade Shirmanov serves was entrusted by the leadership with the execution ..."

The job is really not easy. It seems to be a small problem: to turn four hundred people into corpses. But you can try it at your leisure. How many related operations. At the end of those who have embarked on the path of correction, shoot them. They are in trouble. They want to live. They are screaming. They are kicking. They don't come out of this waited.

But they shot them too.

And then a loop of guitar string fell on the neck of the Firebird. They put it on the back of the neck and tightened it. They know - a sambo wrestler. So no tricks. The

Firebird grabs air with his mouth, grabs a string with his hands, but the string is missing. And Holovanov's huge fist crushes her with a crushing blow. Nastya hung on her arm. Shirmanov grabbed Nastya by the hair, and Kholovanov went to thrash her with his fists, like a rag doll. And the pain doesn't come right away. Holovanov beats, and her head

flies off to the right, then to the left. Kholovanov beats, and Shirmanov the lackey tightens the string so that Nastya does not flutter. They threw what was called Nastya into the wet sand. Holovanov for

lifted her hair up her head:

- Remember, girl, what is behind you. For one guard tower breaks. And how many shots did you shoot in the echelon? And the echelon of thieves was released into the wild. I agree, for the sake of saving Soviet power. But who said that power pays with gratitude for serving it? Remember to death - power is always ungrateful. You have rendered a service to the government. But what is the value of a service that has already been rendered? She's not worth anything. On the contrary, girl, you know too much, that's why you're dangerous. That's why power is released from you. The old law: go to death, but break when leaving. I will give you an easy death. I am kind. You know me. Goodbye. See you in hell. In paradise, you and I, Firebird, will not be accepted. And now... Now kiss my boot.

Nastya opened her eyes.

The whole world is white before her. What

is this? It's a white ceiling.

Smells like a hospital.

She's fine. It's so good that I need to tell everyone, everyone, everyone about it. The words didn't work. There was a breath. There was an obscure sound. Like a piece of song from a car window. And the memories went

quietly: the parachute section, jumping, Stalin's dacha, Glavspetsremstroy, a monastery in the endless forest, Stalin's route, Alexander Bridge, executions, executions, again Glavspetsremstroy and again executions, and her own execution. Strange. Where is she? Don't turn your head. Bandaged head. And the eyes can look straight ahead and see the ceiling. And if you raise your eyes higher, you can see not only the ceiling, but also the wall that is behind it. Color? You can't tell right away what color it is. The color is soft. Sleepy color. And joyful. To the right is a wall. Also a happy color. On the left are flowers. Many colors. Gladiolus. All shades at once. Where can you get gladioli in early spring in Moscow? In the greenhouses of the flower farm of the Kremlin. And if you lower your eyes down, you can see a white sheet. The sheet is not only visible. It can be smelled and tasted. The sheet crunches a little from the touch of the lips, and smells of the sea. Slightly smells of hot iron. But the smell of the iron did not overcome the smell of the sea.

If you look further, you can see a blanket made of camel hair.
The pattern is intricate. The colors are bright. Next is the back of the bed.

There is no more power to watch. Better close your eyes. I want to drink. Calmly and quietly said: "to drink." Maybe she didn't say it, but only marked the word with her lips. But they understood her. The tube touched her lips.

She only needs one sip. Water of inexpressible taste. As in Stalin's dacha. Her eyes are closed, but she is no longer sleeping. She sees again the pine roots in the white sand of the execution pit. She remembers the smell. The smell of a hole. The smell of warm corpses. Why is there no smell of warm corpses here? Why are there different smells?

Like a fox in an incomprehensible situation, she sniffed anxiously. Where is it? She opened her

eyes. Ceiling. Already familiar. Now - eyes up, sort of throwing his head back. There must be a wall. That's right, a wall. And there should be a wall to the right. The way it is. On the left are flowers. That's right - flowers on the left. Eyes down - sheet

duvet, headboard. Nearby is the face of a merciful sister. And a glass with a straw. The communists called the sister of mercy a nurse. What vulgarity: a nurse. But how gently it sounded before: sister of mercy. And why didn't Nastya become a sister of mercy?

How beautiful: a gray long dress, a white apron and a large red cross on the chest. And the captain of the Life Guards of the Cuirassier Regiment, wounded in battle ... Wounded in the head ... Nastya carefully bandages his head ... In fact, her head is bandaged for some reason. This is not a cuirassier captain, but she herself is lying in bed. It was the sister of mercy leaning over her and smiling with a barely perceptible smile. She smiles and leaves, quietly shutting the door. At the

door is a chair on wheels. In the chair - Holovanov. In hospital pajamas. An interesting combination: a dragon, and in pajamas. Leg in plaster. The dragon's leg is broken. Dragon on a broken leg. You need to walk less in the forests, Comrade Dragon, then your leg will not break. The chair has two crutches. The dragon smiles.

- Hello, Firebird. "Hello, Dragon," she whispered very quietly. - How did you sleep? She

just closed her eyes, showing that she slept well. - I shot you. You broke my leg, but you still had to shoot. I did not trust any of my guys with this: it was necessary to shoot near your temple so that the full impression of the execution was, but so that your hearing nerves were not damaged. They bent you over the pit, and the guys picked me up in their arms, brought me up, and I shot. You lost consciousness. And tumbled into the hole. So it happens with almost everyone who is satisfied with a bullshit execution. Fortunately, not high to fall, and gently in the pit. We kept Professor Perzeev in the bushes. He put you down right away. And then they pricked you. So that all the bad things go away in a dream. You slept for a long time. A lot of days. We were all afraid that your strange illness would come back. With heightened senses. Didn't

return. She smiled

weakly. - Well, you me, Firebird, by the leg. Now I'm like a bunny will jump through the corridors. I don't know when they will be allowed to fly again. There, at the execution, everyone was afraid that because of the pain I would not be able to shoot correctly. Already here, in the hospital, you were sleepi

tuning forks near your ears all rang. Check if you are responsive. Reassured: you react. Can you hear me well? She closed her eyes and opened them:

I hear well. - You, Firebird, have a whole life ahead of

you - you control, and you are controlled. In the production process, so to speak. But the series of intensive checks is over. Now you will be checked rarely and without dramatic effects. From time to time. You passed the main control. Only in practical work can a person be tested. We tested you on the real case. The results are encouraging. You know how to work on your own, you know how to analyze, you know how to make the right decisions and implement them, you are not afraid of blood and death. You did not kiss the boot ... Everyone liked it. Before you, only one girl has reached this stage of testing. Before being shot. She didn't kiss the boots either. True, and did not bite. She failed the very last test: I shot at the temple, and she died. Heartbreak. These are not suitable for us. Your heart survived. We need these in control. You suit us, girl. We have a lot of work ahead of you. Control is endless. Now close your eyes. And forget all the bad things. Happiness is the ability to forget the bad. Let you dream

happy dreams.

Good Nastya. She understands that maybe the series of intensive checks is over, she is saved, she just woke up for a few sweet moments in the luxurious ward of the Kremlin hospital, saw her Dragon next to her, calmed down and fell asleep again. And tomorrow she will wake up... But... But maybe everything ended in a completely different way. Maybe our

whole life is just a series of intense tests. Maybe they put everyone

under control and check what each of us and all of us stand for together. They always check. From the very first cry to the very last breath. And, perhaps, for Nastya, a series of intensive checks, called life, is completed. Maybe the ward of the Kremlin hospital, the flowers, the sister of mercy, the Dragon in pajamas - all this was just a dream at the very moment when the bullet pierced her head. Those in the know have said that a dying brain works in a completely different way than one that remains alive. Perhaps, on the orders of Comrade Stalin, a special courier

of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks Anastasia Andreevna Streletskaia, undercover pseudonym Firebird, executed without a sentence on March 12, 1939 at the special stage of the special control group, the performer is Dragon. Perhaps, at the very last moment, in a fleeting dream, the Firebird clearly and clearly saw herself saved and the Dragon nearby. Maybe she saw him as kind simply because she always wanted to see him that way.

She is happy. And not at all scary. She doesn't want to know if she's dying in a pile of warm corpses or just falling asleep among friends and flowers. She is not at all interested in whether she was killed on the orders of Comrade Stalin or saved on the orders of Comrade Stalin. Where is Holovanov? Everyone called him the Dragon. And she called him that. But his name is Alexander. Sasha. Sashenka. Where is he? Maybe he's behind her now? Maybe he removed the magazine from the pistol grip, pulled the bolt, raised the safety lever and hid his Lahti, smelling of gunpowder, in a holster? Or maybe this big, strong man is sitting next to her bed? Maybe Nastya falls asleep in bliss, and the gentle Dragon straightened the blanket and, putting his finger to his lips, stopped the fat professor in white on the threshold: "Hush, comrade Perzeev, don't wake me, I just fell asleep."

Interesting to Nastya: will she wake up again? And if he wakes up, then where? On the other hand, why should she know? Doesn't it matter? Doesn't matter. She just wants to forget everything. She is irresistibly attracted to a fairy-tale land, to an endless gliding flight. She sees a

rock over a playful stream somewhere far, far away in a magical forest. A crystal castle on a rock, in the highest tower - a stern gray-haired old man. Nastya knows him. This is Sebastian. Sevastyan the bear cub. Only he is no longer a bear cub. Only it is no longer painted with blue pictures. Only he is already infinitely old and infinitely young. The wind ruffles his long, shaggy beard, as white as the ceiling of a Kremlin hospital ward. A ray of sun flashed behind, and it seemed to Nastya that his head was in a golden glow. He raised his hand above his head and shouted what everyone should remember. Nastya hears his words and remembers them.

Over the enchanted forest, over the silver lake, over the flowers, which do not exist, his voice thunders: "Love! Three times I say to you: love!

And Nastya wants to smile, but so that no one would guess how happy she is. And I want to express the cherished, but so that no one knows her secret. And Nastya smiles quite imperceptibly, with the very edge of her lips, and whispers so that no one can hear: - I love ...

Newport, Gwent, 1981.

Corrected, supplemented and revised in 2013.

notes

Footnotes

1

The northern one in the period from 1922 to 1955 was called the Yaroslavl station in Moscow; Baltiysky in the period from 1930 to 1942 was called the Rizhsky railway station in Moscow. - ***Approx. ed.***

2

We live in an era of political correctness. Correctness requires smoothing corners and ennobling reality. An example of the introduction into our lives of the principles of ennobling the past and present can be the latest editions of the book "Psychology of the Crowd", in which much is perverted, starting with the name of the author and the title of the book. The articles d, de, du, la, le and others in French surnames indicate noble origin. The surname of the author (Le Bon) our pundits began to write together: Le Bon. The book is called La Psychologie des Foules. It was published in Paris in 1895, and the very next year it was published in translation into many languages of the world, including Russian (the book was first published in Russian by the publishing house of F. F. Pavlenkov in St. Petersburg). The translation of the book's title into Russian was accurate: "Psychology of the Crowd". This title correctly reflects the leitmotif of the book: "The crowd is not capable of creation, only of destruction." In recent years, in Russia, the main provisions of the great psychologist's book have been revised. The book is now being published under the title The Psychology of the Peoples and the Masses, although it is mostly about the insane crowd. To make the new name sound convincing, some scholarly comrades cite the testimony of Maria Ignatievna Glyasser, who was Lenin's personal secretary. According to her, the book "Psychology of Peoples and Masses" was among Lenin's desk books. Glasser's testimony is cited in his book by Boris Bazhanov, who was the secretary of the Politburo, and then Stalin's personal secretary. Is it possible to object to such a serious argument? Can. The fact is that our correct refiners refer not to the original, but to a later "improved" edition of Bazhanov's book. In that edition of Bazhanov's book, which was published in Paris during the author's lifetime, it is indicated that Lenin did not read "Psychology of Peoples and Masses", but rather "Psychology of the Crowd" (Bazhanov B. Memoirs of Stalin's former secretary. Paris. Third wave. 1980. C .117). - **Approx. author.**

3

Red cattle railroad freight cars used to transport prisoners in the 1930s. - ***Approx. ed.***